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Lego Mythica debuts at Legoland Windsor Resort

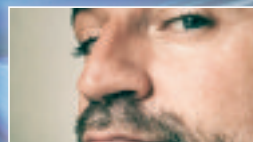
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A chance to reconnect – and not on a screen!

Andrew Mellor **Editor**

WE'VE all been looking forward to the recommencement of trade shows and other industry events after the numerous cancellations of such occasions during the global pandemic so it was disappointing to see the cancellation of the IAAPA Expo Asia in August, when it looked like, up until a couple of weeks beforehand, it would go ahead.

This looked set to be the first industry trade show for about 18 months so many people within the industry would have been very much looking forward to attending, but circumstances obviously dictated otherwise. I guess it's difficult to know how many visitors the show may have received and perhaps a lot of industry representatives would not have wanted to make the trip to Shanghai, China, to attend, but all the same it would have been a real positive for us all if it had gone ahead as we look for a return to more normality in our business lives.

But "onwards and upwards" as the saying goes and now we have a chance to look forward to the IAAPA Expo Europe as the next major trade show in the calendar and one that, at the time of writing (the last day of August), is still going ahead, as is IAAPA's main event of the year, the IAAPA Expo in Orlando in November.

Given the on-going circumstances surrounding the pandemic the European show, due to take place in Barcelona, Spain, from September 28 to 30, will no doubt be a little different this time round and although I hope to be proved wrong, I would predict attendee numbers not being anything like they have been in the past few years. Sure, many parks and other attraction venues will send people to have a look at what manufacturers and suppliers are up to and have been working on during the past 18 months, but it's doubtful that large teams will be present from attractions; rather it could just be one or two representatives from venues who will be in attendance, if they decide to go at all. Or maybe Europeans will just go to this event and miss the Expo in Orlando for this year. We'll have to wait and see. Different countries in Europe continue to impose different rules in relation to COVID-19 so that creates a real challenge and is very confusing when travelling, while the fact that situations can change very quickly and sudden quarantining, for example, can be imposed, clearly makes it a bit of a lottery as to whether to travel or not.

Manufacturers and suppliers who will be exhibiting in Barcelona have also had some difficult decisions to make and I sympathise with their plight too. Here at *InterPark*, we are reducing our team "on the ground" in Barcelona dramatically because of the current situation and although we still plan to report on the event in our next issue as we would normally do, we've decided we can't risk sending all who would normally go until things improve and the travel situation looks more settled.

At the last IAAPA Expo Europe in Paris in September 2019, close to 650 companies exhibited; this year's exhibitors' list (again at the time of writing) shows around 450 exhibitors, still a decent figure but obviously somewhat reduced. Visitor numbers to the Paris show were approximately 16,000 so it remains to be seen how numbers will be impacted at this year's event as a result of COVID-19.

Hopefully there will be no last minute cancellation of the Barcelona show and all those who are planning to attend, both exhibitors and visitors, will enjoy a productive return to face to face meetings and a successful and beneficial event.

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continued precautions and vaccination programmes in the battle against the pandemic

Supporters of:



Calendar

September 28–30

IAAPA Expo Europe, Barcelona, SPAIN
Contact: International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions, 4155 West Taft Vineland Road, Orlando, Florida, USA
Tel: +1 321 319 7600
Fax: +1 321 319 7690
Email: iaapa@IAAPA.org
www.iaapa.org/expos/iaapa-expo-europe

October 16–18

CAE Shanghai 2021, Shanghai World Expo Exhibition and Convention Centre, Shanghai, CHINA
Contact: Katie Wang, L&A International Ltd., 6 Penmere Grove, Sale, Cheshire, M33 4FP, UK
Tel: +44 (0)161 610 0022
Email: katie.w@chinaattractionsexpo.org
www.chinaattractionsexpo.org

October 20–22

RAAPA Expo 2021, Pavilion 55, VDNH, Moscow, RUSSIA
Contact: RAAPA
Tel: +7 495 234 5233
Email: raapa@raapa.ru
www.raapa.ru

October 19–22

WWA Show 2021, Walt Disney World Resort, Orlando, Florida, USA
Contact: WWA, 8826 Santa Fe Drive, Suite 310, Overland Park, KS 66212, USA
Tel: +1 913 381 6734
Email: patty@waterparks.org
www.waterparks.org

November 10–11

Family Attraction Expo 2021, NEC Birmingham, UK
Contact: 4 Colston Ave., Bristol, BS1 2NT, UK
Tel: +44 (0)117 930 4927
www.familyattractionexpo.co.uk

November 16–19

IAAPA Expo, Orange County Convention Centre, Orlando, Florida, USA
Contact: International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions, 4155 West Taft Vineland Road, Orlando, Florida, USA
Tel: +1 321 319 7600
Fax: +1 321 319 7690
Email: iaapa@IAAPA.org
www.iaapa.org/expos/iaapa-expo

November 30–December 2

MAPIC, Palais des Festivals, Cannes, FRANCE
Contact: Reed MIDEM, 27 Quai Alphonse Le Gallo, CS 10026 Boulogne, FRANCE
Tel: +33 179 71 95 15
Email: Daniela.jakovljevic@reedmidem.com
www.mapic.com

2022

January 11–13

EAG 22, Entertainment, Attractions and Gaming International Expo, ExCel London, UK
Contact: Swan Events Ltd., Gainsborough House, 15 High Street, Harpenden, Herts, AL5 2RT, UK
Tel: 01582 767254
Email: karencooke@swanevents.co.uk
www.eagexpo.com

February 3–5

Atrax '22. 9th International Amusement – Attraction, Park – Recreation Industry and Services Exhibition. Istanbul Expo Centre, Istanbul, TURKEY
Contact: Tureks International Fairs Co.
Tel: +90 212 570 6305
Email: nergis@tureksfuar.com.tr
www.tureksfuar.com.tr

March 26–28

CAE Beijing 2022, China International Exhibition Centre, Shunyi New Venue, Beijing, CHINA
Contact: Katie Wang, L&A International Ltd., 6 Penmere Grove, Sale, Cheshire, M33 4FP, UK
Tel: +44 (0)161 610 0022
Email: katie.w@chinaattractionsexpo.org
www.chinaattractionsexpo.org

March 28–30

DEAL 2022, Dubai World Trade Centre, Dubai, UAE
Contact: International Expo-Consults (IEC)
Tel: +971 4 343 5777
Email: deal@iecduhai.com
www.dealmiddleeastshow.com

June 8–10

IAAPA Expo Asia 2022, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, Hong Kong SAR, CHINA
Contact: International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions, 4155 West Taft Vineland Road, Orlando, Florida, USA
Tel: +1 321 319 7600
Fax: +1 321 319 7690
Email: iaapa@IAAPA.org
www.iaapa.org/expos/iaapa-expo-asia

 Additional copies of **InterPark** distributed at these events.

As dates sometimes change, please check with organisers before visiting international trade events.

The IAAPA Expo is due to take place at the Orange County Convention Centre in Orlando, Florida, from November 16 to 19



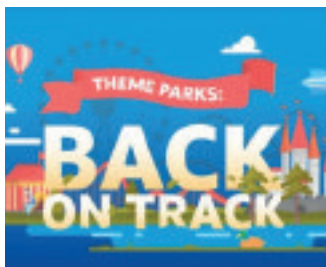


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UK and US consumers ready to return to theme parks

CONSUMERS in the UK and the US are ready to return to visiting theme parks and other attraction destinations. This

was the finding of recent research from Oracle and Merlin Entertainments.

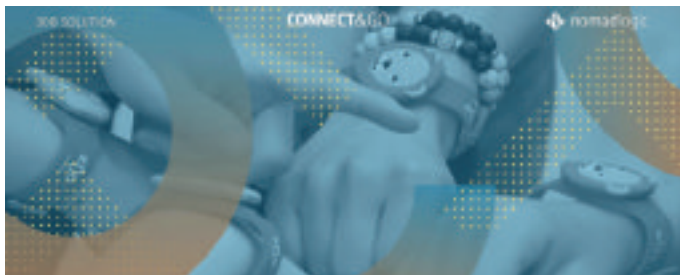
The rising consumer confidence is being labelled as the 'JOLA phenomenon' – the Joy of Looking Ahead.

In the US, the survey showed there was a 12 per cent rise in consumers getting back to leisure activities, jumping from 68 per cent to 80 per cent in May and June. Similar confidence is shown in the UK, with 80 per cent of consumers saying they are optimistic about visiting leisure attractions with friends and family.

The research sought to understand how consumers are booking and behaving in relation to holidays and outings this summer as COVID-19 continues to dominate the headlines. The study also highlights how technology will enhance the visitor experience at attraction sites like Alton Towers, Legoland and the London Eye.

The findings also reveal that in the US one in three travellers are staying closer to home. This figure stood at one in five in the UK. In the US, 20 per cent are booking more weekend trips and shorter stays than pre-pandemic. In the UK, 25 per cent of visitors are exhibiting this behaviour.

Connect&Go acquires photo and video specialists



CONNECT&GO, provider of RFID and smart wearable technology and intuitive operating management systems for the leisure, sports and entertainment industries, has acquired two companies that specialise in photo and video solutions.

Connect&GO has announced the acquisition of Nomad Logic, an experimental technology studio that was founded in 2000, and 3DB Solution, one of the longest operating players in the amusement park photo industry.

For more than 20 years, Nomad Logic has been creating shareable memories with advanced video, photography and augmented reality. The studio has worked on large-scale projects around the world for high-profile brands, including Nintendo, Lincoln Park Zoo, Norwegian Cruise Lines and more.

Speaking about the acquisition, Jean-Sébastien Lessard, president and founder of Nomad Logic, and now partner and vice-president of Experiential Solutions at Connect&GO, said: "I'm very enthusiastic to join the Connect&GO team, who are global leaders in technology for the leisure, sports and entertainment industry. The synergies generated by the combination of our teams, our innovative technologies as well as our expertise in creating shareable experiences will enable us to become global leaders in the creation of memories very quickly."

3DB Solutions was founded in 2001 by Daniel Bleau. The amusement park photo specialists created the Ride Photo System, capture technology that uses GigE digital cameras designed for high-speed rides.



BOLT roller coaster sets sail with Mardi Gras cruise ship

BOLT, the "ultimate sea coaster," developed by Maurer Rides, has been launched on the cruise ship, the Mardi Gras.

Maurer Rides built the ride in collaboration with the cruise company that operates the Mardi Gras, Carnival Cruise Line. BOLT is located on the top deck of the luxury liner and riders are turned into real drivers as they board a two-seater bike and step on the gas. The ride accelerates to speeds of around 60mph as drivers race along the track and through drops, bends, curves and a hairpin bend, all while enjoying seascape views of the endless horizon.

The coaster boasts 220m of track and a 360 degree panoramic view of the sea. It reaches a height of 57m above sea level and is based on Maurer Rides' patented Spike coaster technology.

Christine Duffy, president of Carnival Cruise Line, commented on the ship's latest addition, saying: "Mardi Gras is our most innovative ship with many really special attractions and venues. But the crowning glory of it all is BOLT, the first roller coaster at sea."

BOLT was manufactured by Maurer in 2019 but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mardi Gras remained berthed in Barcelona until this year. In June 2021, it finally headed to its home port in Orlando, Florida.

The sea coaster "set sail" with passengers for the first time on July 31.

AGS introduces RailShot Mini Golf

ADVENTURE Golf and Sports (AGS), specialists in the design, construction, fabrication and installation of interactive entertainment attractions, has introduced RailShot Mini Golf, a portable, changeable nine-hole miniature golf course.

RailShot is designed to be set up quickly with minimal transport space required, making it a suitable choice for rental and special event providers.

The AGS team has modified a similar edge system used on the company's AmericanPie course to create the product. A unique pin system and a new 3D printed portable "Elevated Hole Cup," which replaces the sunken hole cup set up, provides a unique mini golf system, which enables golf-hole shapes to be changed within minutes at any time. RailShot can be set up on any surface, as it does not require specific turf.

Scott Lundmark, AGS president, said: "This is an exciting, lower-cost entry in our line of mini golf products. RailShot Mini Golf is designed so the owners can change any or all golf shapes to create a new course within minutes."



Storyland Studios teams up with Ubisoft to develop entertainment experiences

STORYLAND Studios, the international experience design and production company, has announced a partnership with video game publisher Ubisoft.

The two specialists in their fields will collaborate to develop a new generation of tech-enabled, in-person, themed entertainment experiences.

The partnership will mean Storyland Studios is at the forefront of designing multi-brand themed entertainment experiences that are based on the game worlds built by Ubisoft. The experiences will be available for families and fans to enjoy around the world.

Ubisoft has developed many well-known interactive video gaming series, including Just Dance, Prince of Persia and Assassin's Creed. Storyland Studios will be creating themed entertainment concepts for locations across the globe. One location will be a full-scale Ubisoft theme park.

Blake Ryan, president and CEO of Storyland Studios, commented: "The team is ready to dive in. As a firm that has embraced and championed innovation for more than two decades, we're really excited to partner with Ubisoft to continue that future-forward innovation."

Storyland is expected to begin presenting the concepts at the IAAPA Expo in November.



NEWS IN BRIEF

EUROPE Plans have been submitted for the creation of the Blackpool Central project in England, which would comprise three indoor entertainment centres, as well as restaurants and a hotel. The venue would also feature a multi-storey car park with more than 1,300 spaces. The proposal includes plans for the heritage buildings located at the site to be transformed into a new Heritage Quarter.

US In a bid to preserve biodiversity, Los Angeles Zoo has announced an ambitious conservation plan. Over the next five years, the zoo will use its in-depth experience, knowledge, expertise and partnerships to focus on conservation. The plan is centred on six areas – social and environmental justice, human-wildlife co-existence, illegal wildlife trade, California conservation, evidence-based conservation and conservation translocations.

MIDDLE EAST Green Planet Dubai, an indoor rainforest, has become the home of the first bearcat in the Middle East. Named Fluffy, the bearcat is the largest animal at the indoor rainforest. Fluffy is two-years-old and currently weighs just 14kg. When fully grown, bearcats can weigh up to 30kg. The introduction of Fluffy marks the first time in the world that a large animal such as a lemur or bearcat has inhabited a multi-species bio-dome.

CHINA Testing for Universal Beijing Resort is moving at full-speed ahead of the theme park's grand opening. Song Yu, chairman of Beijing Tourism Group, said that stress tests for the resort are in their final stages.



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Walltopia announces launch of new online tools

WALLTOPIA, the Bulgarian climbing wall and active entertainment manufacturer, has announced the launch of two new online tools.

The online platforms are designed to improve the process of concept creation for active entertainment attractions. Using Walltopia's new product configurations, entertainment site operators will be able to develop a concept design in 3D for their attraction and be provided with an instant quote, without making any commitment. The new online tools will be available for Walltopia Ropes Courses and the aerial roller coaster zip line known as the Rollglider.

Walltopia's Product Configurations were developed during the COVID-19 crisis, at a time when travelling was restricted and the planning and creation of new attractions was hugely challenging. Walltopia's new tools are designed to help operators overcome the challenges related to some of the most difficult aspects of the planning and initial design of new active entertainment.



New multi-dimension launch coaster comes to Vulcania

A NEW multi-dimension launch coaster has arrived in Vulcania, a theme park centred on activities about the discovery of volcanoes, in France. Known as Namazu, the coaster has been developed by Intamin.

Namazu is an immersive ride designed for the family. It takes riders on a journey with seismologists that starts in a themed queue line. Guests then enter the Namazu team's lab and embark on a memorable scientific adventure in an active seismic zone.

When the coaster leaves the station, it arrives in a stone cave where an earthquake erupts. The cave collapses, causing the train to plunge down several metres. When the train escapes from the cave, riders are propelled up the coaster's first launch up an airtime incline.

The journey is full of twists and turns, taking riders over a zig-zag speed bump, a high speed S-turn, over an S-hump and into a second launch. Namazu comprises 584m of track and reaches top speeds of almost 70kph.

In a statement about the new attraction, Intamin said: "Intamin congratulates Vulcania on their first roller coaster operating in their park and is proud to have contributed to this beautiful project."



Safari Park submits plans for new 'big cat' accommodation

WEST Midland Safari Park in the UK has submitted plans for the development of new luxury overnight accommodation for guests featuring Sumatran tigers.

Plans have been submitted to Wyre Forest District Council for the second phase of the park's Safari Lodge accommodation development. Two new lodges will be located inside the Safari Lodges accommodation site, which was built to enable guests to get up close to red panda, elephants and cheetah, while enjoying panoramic views of the park's unique wildlife.

The new accommodation will be single storey and will be integrated into the recently built tiger habitat. The lodges will sleep up to four people and feature open-plan living space and views of the tiger habitat through floor to ceiling windows. Hot tubs will be available for guests on private verandas, which will boast slatted roofs that can be opened or closed.

Chris Kelly, managing director of West Midlands Safari Park, said: "Our tiger lodges are a hugely exciting project for us to be embarking on and we're looking forward to seeing guests' reaction to these stunning new designs."

RAAPA shares results of summer forum held in Rostov-on-Don

THE Russian Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (RAAPA) has shared the conclusion of its highly anticipated 9th International Summer Forum of Amusement Industry Specialists.

The event took place in Rostov-on-Don from July 14 to 16. More than 180 professionals and specialists from the Russian attractions industry across 52 Russian cities took part in the forum. The Ministry of Culture of the Rostov Region and the Ministry of Economic Development of the Rostov Region provided an active role in organising the event which was sponsored by the Russian company Azov. The RIF Group of companies from Rostov-on-Don were the forum's partners.

On the day before the forum began, participants had the opportunity to explore the historical quarter of the city on a walking tour. The event began with a welcome address by the general sponsor, while presentations and talks were provided by Yana Pilyavskaya, head of the Department of Culture of the city of Rostov-on-Don, Maria Kuleshova, chief specialist of the MICE Development Centre, the Agency for Tourism and Business Communications of the Rostov Region and Elizaveta Rossiyskaya, director for sustainable development projects at Hello IO.

The 9th RAAPA Summer Forum was the most popular of RAAPA summer forums and received excellent reviews from professionals in the attractions industry.



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Plans unveiled for Isle of White dinosaur park and museum

PLANS are in motion to make Sandown, the seaside resort on the Isle of Wight, UK, the dinosaur capital of Britain. The tourist destination will comprise of a dinosaur park and a research facility located on the seafront.

The museum will be created through a collaboration between a local resident's association known as Dinosaur Isle Group and Dinosaurier-Park International. The latter is dedicated to the development, building and operation of dinosaur parks and dinosaur museums in Europe.

The aim of the project would be to preserve the long-term financial viability of the fossil collection on the Isle of Wight that is internationally recognised. The museum would also act as a place for extended scientific and research activities to be carried out.

The dinosaur park that would accompany the museum will combine education and entertainment, boosting tourism on the island further. In a statement, the project partners said: "This new attraction will bring together a new museum, a dinosaur park and a science research facility to display and preserve the island's heritage for future generations. The development will be both exciting and educational, making it perfectly suited to the needs of families, tourists, schools and universities."

Merlin to open new Madame Tussauds in Budapest

MERLIN Entertainments is teaming up with Dorottya Experience Kft to open a new Madame Tussauds in Budapest, Hungary. The site is due to open in early 2022.

The wax museum in Budapest will be both interactive and immersive. It will feature celebrities in wax from Hungary and around the world. The stars will range from musicians to well-known sports men and women, both from modern and bygone eras.

The venue will extend for 2,000sq.m. It will be located near Vörösmarty square in the Hungarian capital city. The new attraction site is expected to help revive tourism in Budapest in the wake of the pandemic.

Chris Scurrah, franchise director at Merlin, commented: "We are delighted to be launching our Madame Tussauds franchise in Budapest with a partner experienced in the field of brand-building and tourism. Following a successful opening, we will continue to look at other Madame Tussauds franchise opportunities around the globe, in markets where the brand is not already present. Future partners are already being identified."



Mandoria indoor theme park opens in Poland

MANDORIA, a huge indoor theme park that is open all-year round, has opened in central Poland. The venue is inspired by the Renaissance era, styled as a 16th-century trading city, with attractions that make visitors feel they are stepping back in time.

The park's City of Adventures area is home to a host of rides and attractions, including roller coasters, classic carousels, boat rides and more. Mandoria is just 20 minutes from Lodz, the third largest city in Poland. It is located in Ptak Fashion City, a mall that comprises retail outlets and dining offerings.

Daniel Zielinski, Mandoria's park manager, commented on the design of the new theme park, saying: "It has its inhabitants and its secrets. Mandoria is a family park where you can discover something new all the time. And that is important – visitors will experience it together because all attractions can be enjoyed by both children and adults."

MVRDV unveils design of Harbour Experience Centre in Rotterdam



MVRDV, the international operating architecture and urbanism practice aimed at solving global issues, has unveiled the design of the Harbour Experience Centre in Rotterdam.

The venue is a visitor centre and exhibition space located in the Port of Rotterdam. The centre features five rotated exhibition spaces that are stacked. The site will replace FutureLand, a temporary information centre in the Port of Rotterdam. The Harbour Experience Centre is a larger and permanent exhibition and information centre, which was constructed due to the success of FutureLand.

Visitors will be able to learn about the history of the Port of Rotterdam. The centre will boast a large panoramic window, which looks out on the harbour and the North Sea, as will the ground floor café and a fourth-floor restaurant.

Winy Maas, founding partner at MVRDV, commented: "We think of the Harbour Experience Centre as a machine to reveal the incredible world of the port." The centre is due to open in Rotterdam in 2024.



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Rainbow Productions makes debut at SEA show 2021



RAINBOW Productions, specialists in the manufacture of costume character and mascots, was due to make its debut appearance at the Saudi Entertainment and Amusement Show (SEA) this year.

The SEA Expo was set to take place from September 7 to 9 and was the first exhibition Rainbow Productions has attended since COVID restrictions began to be lifted. Exhibiting at the show will enable the British-based company to showcase their new services to a Middle East audience.

As export manager James Barlow commented: "As we emerge from a world of Zoom calls and virtual exhibitions, we've learned that nothing can replace actual face-to-face interaction, so we are thrilled for the return of in-person trade shows. For the first time in over a year we will have the opportunity to reconnect with new and existing clients face-to-face and we can't wait to showcase our new services."

Having worked with many of the region's biggest names in the attractions industry, including Global Village, Ferrari World, IMG World of Adventures and Warner Bros., Rainbow Productions is already well established in the Middle East. In addition, the company recently created mascots for all of the 16 football clubs in the Saudi Professional Football League.

National Aquarium Abu Dhabi nears opening date

THE finishing touches are being made to the National Aquarium Abu Dhabi, which is set to open later this year at Al Qana.

Showcasing over 200 sharks and rays, the aquarium will be the largest and only public aquarium in Abu Dhabi.

The facility will extend for over 9,000sq.m and comprise of freshwater and marine life fish, as well as amphibians, reptiles, mammals and birds. Visitors will be able to explore 60 exhibits across 11 different geographical zones, with the aim of the aquarium being to reconnect people with nature.

The National Aquarium Abu Dhabi is based at Al Qana, the nation's wellness, dining and entertainment centre. Al Qana is situated next to the Khor Al Maqta waterway.

The facility will be home to the only Scalloped Hammer Head sharks and Bull sharks in the Emirates. The aquarium will also be home to Sand Tiger sharks, Lemon sharks, Black Tip Reef sharks and Zebra sharks.



Expo 2020 Dubai and UN Global Compact combine for new forum

EXPO 2020 Dubai and United Nations Global Compact are teaming up to host a Sustainable Development Business Forum.

The forum will take place during Expo's Global Goals Week, which is being held from January 16 to 22, 2022. It is aimed at uniting businesses and driving them to take action towards a sustainable and inclusive future.

UN Global Compact is the largest corporate sustainability initiative in the world. The business forum will highlight the work of Global Compact and explore how the international community can develop economic prosperity for all, while achieving sustainability goals. More than 200 participants from around the world will collaborate at Expo 2020 to encourage a new wave of members to UN Global Compact.

Nadia Verjee, chief of staff at Expo 2020 Dubai, said: "Our collaboration with the United Nations Global Compact is another milestone in Expo's wider relationship with the UN. It builds on our shared commitment to strategic action, collaboration and innovation to advance the SDGs and exemplifies Expo 2020's mission to bring the world together to create a better future for people and planet."



Holovis secures £4m backing for Middle East expansion



HOLOVIS International, specialists in the creation of immersive and mixed reality to engage audiences, has secured funding of a guaranteed £4m (\$5.5m) to assist with expansion into the Middle East.

The funding is coming from HSBC UK in conjunction with UK Export Finance. The Middle East expansion includes the launch of a new permanent Holovis International office in the region.

Holovis has worked with some of the biggest visitor attraction and entertainment brands in the world, including Merlin Entertainments, Coke, EMAAR Entertainment and McLaren and

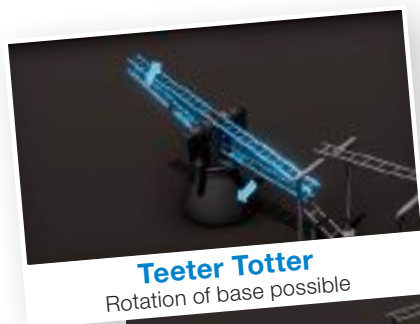
Mike Wildman, Holovis finance director, commented: "The facility from HSBC UK and UK Export Finance has helped to ensure our continued growth as a company and enabled us to secure a prestigious new contract which will not only help our growth across the Middle East but also across other markets in the future.

"While we supply both the entertainment and enterprise markets, almost 90 per cent of our work is now solely focussed on the entertainment industry. Although the sector has faced numerous challenges over the past year, we have continued to see investment from our clients into new attractions, particularly more technology driven experiences, as customers' demands and expectations continue to increase," Wildman added.

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World's tallest/fastest Screaming Swing coming to SeaWorld San Antonio

SEAWORLD San Antonio has announced a new high-thrill, record-breaking attraction is coming to the park in spring 2022.

Tidal Surge, from S&S Worldwide, will be the tallest and fastest Screaming Swing in the world, soaring guests to heights of 135ft. while reaching speeds of up to 68mph.

The attraction will seat up to 40 riders and will feature two pendulum-like arms which rise progressively higher on each swing. The duelling arms alternate sides as they sway back and forth, creating airtime moments.

When seated on the Tidal Surge, riders' legs will dangle below them as they soar above the water ski lake while taking in views of the park. The attraction will then plunge guests back towards earth after reaching multiple negative G moments.

Tidal Surge will be the latest thrill ride at SeaWorld San Antonio, joining the park's four roller coasters, a high swing, two animal rescue adventure experiences and a family coaster.



Dollywood teams up with Holtz builders to build housing for seasonal workers

DOLLYWOOD has announced a partnership with Wisconsin-based building company Holtz, to construct housing at the Pigeon Forge Park for its seasonal workers.

The residence hall-style building will cost approximately \$20m and will accommodate more than 750 Dollywood employees. The four-storey facility will extend to 136,000sq.ft and is due to be completed in May 2022. The site will be operated by Holtz's International Residence Hall brand.

Employees eligible to live in the new housing complex will include students participating in the US Summer Work Travel programme, those taking part in US college campus organisations such as Campus Outreach and Dollywood college interns who are working on specific assignments. Employees of other area businesses in similar programmes through organisations like the Sevier County's Southern Hospitality Internship Programme will also be eligible to make use of the facility.

Tim Berry, Dollywood vice-president of human resources, commented on the partnership saying: "We partnered with Holtz Builders because they have proven successful at helping similar destinations create housing options to support the needs of their growing communities."

Attractions revealed for world's first standalone Peppa Pig park

RIDES and attractions have been revealed for the world's first standalone Peppa Pig theme park. The park will feature six rides, six themed playscapes, a water play area and other attractions designed to provide a fun and interactive day for little ones.

The theme park will be located at Legoland Florida resort and will open in April 2022. The six rides include Daddy Pig's Roller Coaster, Peppa Pig's Balloon ride, Grandad Dog's Pirate Boat ride, Grampy Rabbit's Dinosaur Adventure, Mr. Bull's High Striker and Peppa's Pedal Bike Tour and George's Tricycle Trail.

The play spaces and additional attractions include the Muddy Puddles Splash Pad, Fun Fair, George's Fort, Grandpa Pig's Greenhouse, Peppa Pig's Treehouse, Rebecca Rabbit's Playground, Madame Gazelle's Nature Trail and Mr. Potato's Showtime Arena. There will also be a cinema, where youngsters can take time out and enjoy watching Peppa Pig films.

Peppa Pig fans are able to jump on a digital exploration of the Peppa Pig Theme Park via a new augmented reality activity that is available on the park's Instagram and Facebook pages.



Therme Group to create year-round well-being destination in Canada



IN the latest development of its global expansion programme, Therme Group, creator of advanced well-being resorts around the world, has announced plans to build a £250m well-being resort in Ontario Place, Canada.

The organisation is working with the government of Ontario and the City of Toronto to develop the year-round destination. The resort will contribute to the redevelopment of Ontario Place.

Therme Canada will be a family-friendly experience with indoor and outdoor pools, waterslides and a wavepool, as well as natural spaces to relax and undergo sports performance and recovery services. The destination will also be home to luxury botanical gardens.

The resort will offer fun and healthy activities for all ages and affordable wellness therapies to cater for all requirements. Guests will also be able to enjoy healthy and sustainable food and drink.

Therme Canada will be located at the waterfront property, Ontario Place, which has historically been a destination for recreation, entertainment and leisure. It is expected that the new development will create more than 2,200 construction jobs, as well as 800 full time permanent positions. It is estimated the facility will bring in excess of 1.6m visitors to Ontario Place every year.

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Disney Imagination Campus to launch in 2022

WALT Disney Imagineering is to launch a Disney Imagination Campus in 2022. The campus

will involve a series of workshops dedicated to helping students learn how to use their creativity and imagination to solve challenges.

The campus will be launched in January 2022 when students will have the opportunity to enrol in reimagined workshops in the subjects of Science and Technology, Arts and Humanities and Leadership and Innovation. The workshops will be created in collaboration with Walt Disney Imagineering.

Speaking about the campus project, Maryann Smith, vice-president of sales, services and events at The Walt Disney Company, said: "Our Walt Disney Imagineering partners are renowned for Blue Sky thinking, masterful storytelling and creative problem-solving. We've taken these key skills and worked with Walt Disney Imagineering, Disney Live Entertainment and other Disney thought leaders to create new educational experiences to challenge students to use their imagination, all within our real-world learning laboratories and performance venues across our theme parks."

There will also be opportunities for students to be involved in performing arts workshops, with performances making a return.

Plans in motion for story-focused theme park in Tennessee

STORYLAND Studio, a design and production studio in the US and Europe, has been appointed to design the interactive and story-focused theme park in Tennessee known as Storyville Gardens.

The theme park will be aimed at reigniting the love of reading. The rides, attractions and shows at the park will be centred on stories from Africa, Europe, Asia and America. Storyville Gardens will combine cutting-edge technology with traditional show-based entertainment to bring interactive and inspiring edutainment experiences to all ages.

Ben Thompson, chief strategy officer and head of global clients at Storyland Studios, shared his excitement of the impending project saying: "We want to create an unforgettable experience that ignites an insatiable love of reading and story in the next generation of children. We're incredibly excited to begin the next phase of creation with the Storyville Gardens team."

The concept for the theme park was imagined by Elde and DeLisa Guerrier, owners of the real estate and development company Guerrier Development in Nashville. The Guerriers' vision is to create a story-focused theme park that offers around 220,000sq. ft of entertainment, retail dining and hotels.

An official site for the theme park is expected to be announced at the end of 2021. Construction is due to begin in mid-2022.



HalloWeekends to return to Cedar Point

HALLOWEENDS, the much-loved Halloween event, is coming back to Cedar Point this autumn.

HalloWeekends will feature both the Trick and Treats Fall Fest and the Haunt at the 364 acre amusement park in Ohio. Thursday nights will see scare mazes and haunted attractions open in the park as part of the Haunt. On Fridays, visitors can participate in Halloween activities of the Tricks and Treats Fall Fest during the day and the Haunt at night. On Saturdays and Sundays, guests will be entertained by both the Trick and Treats Fall Fest and the Haunt.

On top of the spooky extravaganza, Cedar Point will be terminating the practice of guests having to make reservations before visiting the park. As of October 3, 2021, visitors can enter Cedar Point without a reservation.

SkyFly: Soar America opens at Pigeon Forge



SKYFLY: Soar America, hailed as a cornerstone attraction at The Island in Pigeon Forge, is now open.

Dynamic Attractions, creators of cutting-edge rides for theme parks, created the new flying theatre for the popular theme park in Tennessee. The attraction utilises an innovative ride system which gives riders the feeling of flight as they are suspended in the air in front of a 40ft. spherical screen. A six-minute film then whisks riders on an exhilarating journey across the US. The motion picture is accompanied by special effects, including wind, scents and mist.

Clay McManus, The Island's executive who co-led the development of SkyFly in partnership with Dynamic Entertainment, said: "This adventure ride will thrill everyone and will quickly become a top reason for families to visit the Smoky Mountains and Pigeon Forge. I encourage everyone thinking of coming to the Smoky Mountains to come and experience this incredibly fun attraction."

SkyFly: Soar America opened in July and according to Dynamic Technologies, reaction to the attraction from guests has been very positive.



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Ocean Park opens Explorer R technology experience hub

HONG Kong's Ocean Park has opened an experience hub known as Explorer R. The multi-media attraction is located at the park's Whiskers Harbour.

The attraction utilises technology to educate young guests. It boasts a combination of interactive play and virtual games. Visitors have the chance to create their own personalised avatars, before participating in physical activities and experiments in a virtual journey.

Youngsters can create an AI SuperAnimal made from over 4,400 body combinations. Their creations can be taken home and played with and cared for via the Explorer R mobile app.

Two Explorer R workshops have opened at Ocean Park. One is called Ninja in Nature and the other Camouflage Kids! Both comprise technological games.

Children also have the opportunity to participate in a digital coding session at the Sea Land Expedition Summer Adventure. Additionally, Ocean Park has opened time-limited experiences at Whiskers Harbour, including Upsized Planet, Explorer Stops and workshops.



Ghibli Museum in Japan launches crowdfunding campaign

THE Ghibli Museum in Mitaka, Japan, has launched a crowdfunding campaign to help save it from permanent closure.

The museum was forced to close when COVID-19 reared its head in February last year and did not reopen until July 2020. However, the attraction had to close again from April until June this year. In a bid to save it from permanent closure due to lost revenue, the city of Mitaka launched a crowdfunding campaign on July 16.

The campaign set a target of \$91,000 and in just days it had smashed the target, raising more than \$200,000 in donations. The crowd funder is open until January 31, 2022.

The Ghibli Museum, which celebrates the work of Studio Ghibli, the animation house that creates anime classics like Princess Mononoke and My Neighbour Totoro, opened in 2001. The museum has already received a grant from Mitaka city, but the funds were not sufficient in taking care of the necessary maintenance and repairs.



White Christmas to return to Warner Bros. Movie World, Australia

THE White Christmas event will be returning to Warner Bros. Movie World theme park on the Gold Coast in Queensland, Australia, this December.

The event will include similar festivities to previous White Christmas events, including a White Christmas Parade, a meet Santa experience, Santa's Village and a fun-filled entertainment schedule. A Christmas feast will be prepared by Mrs. Claus and her Elves at Santa's Chalet and guests will be able to enjoy visits throughout the dinner by some of Santa's special friends.

Visitors who purchase Rudolph's Candy Quest will be able to explore magical precincts and collect Christmas candy treats at every stop. These self-guided candy trails pass through Christmas Corner and Santa's Village. Guests can also visit the Fairy Trees House and Fun Zone.

Christmas decorating, whereby guests are invited to decorate their own baubles, mugs and gingerbread, will add to the fun, enabling visitors of all ages to create their own handmade Christmas keepsake. Official dates for the White Christmas festivities at Warner Bros. Movie World have yet to be released.

Nintendo Gallery Museum set for 2024 opening in Japan



FOLLOWING the launch of Super Nintendo World at Universal Studios Japan, Nintendo is planning to open a museum known as the Nintendo Gallery in the city of Uji, Japan, in the spring of 2024.

Plans are in motion for Nintendo to repurpose an old factory building and the land it sits on in Uji in the Kyoto province. The old factory is known as the Nintendo Uji Ogura Plant and was built in 1969. It was designed to make playing cards and act as a customer service centre for the repair of Nintendo products. The Nintendo Gallery will feature much-loved Nintendo gaming products from the past. Guest experiences are also planned for the site.

In a statement, the company said: "Nintendo has been discussing the possibility of building a gallery, as a way to share Nintendo's product development history and philosophy with the public. To this end, the Nintendo Uji Ogura Plant will be renovated to accommodate the gallery, a decision reached after taking consideration of the city of Uji's plan of redeveloping the nearby Ogura Station area."



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Bali could be home to the biggest theme park in south east Asia

REPORTS are circulating that the largest theme park in south east Asia could be coming to Bali in 2025.

According to reports, Paramount Pictures has signed a deal with the Indonesian firm PT Kios Ria Freasi to develop the ambitious theme park. The destination would help boost tourism and the economy in Bali, post-pandemic.

Bambang Soesatyo, speaker of the People's Consultative Assembly, commented: "The development of Paramount theme park will strengthen Bali's position as a recreational and entertainment hub for world citizens. It will also improve Bali's economy, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic."

The Paramount theme park is estimated to undergo a soft launch in 2025. The destination is expected to pull in up to five million visitors a year.

KidZania to open third facility in Japan

KIDZANIA, the international chain of indoor family entertainment centres, is to open its third facility in Japan.

KidZania venues are interactive miniature cities for children, designed to educate youngsters about money management and careers. The company currently has 25 venues worldwide in 20 different countries, as well as 10 further facilities planned for the US, Hong Kong and Jordan markets.

The first KidZania destination in Japan opened in Tokyo in 2006. A second facility was launched in 2009 in Koshien. The third destination will be managed by the KCJ Group. The site will extend across 6,600sq.m and feature more than 60 activities involving role play. The facility will be located in the LaLaport Futuoka shopping centre.

Xavier Lopez Ancona, CEO of KidZania, said: "We are really excited about welcoming KidZania Fukuoka. Our continuous growth in Japan wouldn't have been possible without the remarkable work of KCJ Group."

KidZania Fukuoka is due to open on the island of Kyushu by summer 2022.



New theme park to be built in Cameron Highlands, Malaysia

A NEW theme park is to be built in the Cameron Highlands, a district in Pahang, Malaysia. The venue will extend across a 24 hectare valley at an elevation of 220m.

Known as Escape Cameron Highlands, the new park is the beginning of the Escape brand's expansion, which is planning to extend its developments both domestically in Malaysia and internationally.

The first phase of the theme park project is due to open in 2023. It will have an investment of approximately \$3.6m. One of the main attractions of the initial phase of the park will be an artificial ski slope. Two or three other phases are due to be built over the next 10 years and the completed project is expected to have a total investment of \$24m.

The design of the theme park will be based on five themed European villages, each at different elevations. An Alpine village will be located at the top of the park and an Iberian village at the bottom. All will feature traditional European activities, as well as themed accommodation and F&B.



Pokémon Fossil Museum kicks-off tour of Japan

THE Pokémon Fossil Museum, a new travelling exhibit delivered by the Pokémon Company, has begun its tour of Japan.

The exhibit started at the Mikasa City Museum in Hokkaido and was due to move to the Shimane Nature Museum of Mt. Sanbe on September 20. The temporary exhibit features the "fossils" of Pokémon characters, next to real-life relics, as a means of introducing children to palaeontology.

Guests will be able to compare Pokémon with "actual" fossils that are dug up around the world, while having fun and learning about palaeontology. The exhibit also features life-size displays of Pokémon characters including Omanyte and Aerodactyl. By drawing similarities between the natural world and fictional creatures, the exhibit is similar to the Natural History Museum's Fantastic Beasts exhibition.

The Pokémon Fossil Museum will head to Tokyo's national Museum of Nature and Science in spring 2022. It will then move to the Toyohashi Museum of Natural History in the summer of next year.



Changbai Mountain Flying Theatre takes first flight

FOLLOWING five years in the making, the Changbaishan flying experience has finally taken its first flight.

The immersive and sensory Flying Theatre attraction was created through a collaboration between the visual effects studio Moonraker VFX, natural history production company Talesmith and Flying Theatre Films. Visitors at the Changbaishan National Park in China can now enjoy an immersive and sensory perspective of the sacred Changbai Mountain.

The attraction was commissioned by PEL Creative. It is equipped with an innovative hydraulic seating system known as 'I-ride,' provided by Brogent Technologies. Guests are suspended in front of a 60ft, half-dome screen, which immerses audiences in an aerial flight of the park with uninterrupted views of the holy mountain. In the 4D experience, audiences soar over rocky ravines, dense forests and wide-open plains, before they reach a lake-based summit.

Commenting on the complexity of the project, Simon Clarke, creative director of Moonraker VFX and founder of Flying Theatre Films, said:

"This was one of the most technical projects we have ever undertaken at Moonraker, but we're hugely proud of the finished experience which, after five years in the making, is wowing visitors with a unique, fully immersive and sensory perspective on an environment rich in natural history."



Legoland Sichuan to open in 2023

MERLIN Entertainments has teamed up with Global Zhongjun to construct and operate a full-scale Legoland resort in the Sichuan Province in China. The resort will be the largest Legoland in the world.

Legoland Sichuan will be situated in the Tianfu New Area in Meishan, which is approximately 60km from Chengdu. The new theme park will be operated by Merlin and will feature two Lego themed hotels containing around 500 rooms.

Global Zhongjun is a joint venture, comprising the development companies Zhongjun Beijing and the Chengdu Global Century – Exhibition and Travel Group (ETG).

Legoland Sichuan is due to open in 2023, which will mark the 10-year anniversary of the first Legoland hotel opening, at Legoland Windsor in the UK.

Nick Varney, CEO of Merlin Entertainments, commented: "There's no doubt that China represents a great opportunity for strong global brands. Having been active in China for over a decade, Merlin has gained critical insights into Chinese consumers and built a broad portfolio of Midway attractions within key cities.

"Leveraging this position, we're delighted to be able to announce the development of a Legoland park in Sichuan Province together with a strong partner in Global Zhongjun. It is an exciting prospect and a significant milestone in the expansion of the Legoland estate in China."

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WATERPARKS

New waterpark opens at Bahamas Baha Mar

BAHA Mar, a popular family resort in The Bahamas, has opened a new waterpark. The Baha Bay waterpark opened in July and is exclusively available to guests staying at the Baha Mar resort.

The new luxury beachfront waterpark covers 15 acres. The site cost \$200m to develop and features 24 waterslides along with a wealth of other water attractions, including the Duelling Riptide water coaster, group raft rides and the Turtle Beach and Stingray Cove kids' areas.

The waterpark is also home to a 400ft long action river, a wavepool featuring 500,000 gallons of water and a state-of-the-art FlowCurl surf simulator. The wavepool is described as "the most spectacular in the Caribbean." There are a total of nine different eating options at the park, as well as a Sugar Factory and Barracuda food trucks.

Graeme Davis, president of Baha Mar, said: "As the latest addition to the resort destination's collection of celebrated adult and family-friendly offerings, Baha Bay will provide our guests with new exceptional experiences, suitable for all ages, as we continue to redefine the Caribbean vacation."



Water raft ride coming to Quassy Amusement & Waterpark

A NEW water raft ride is to be built at Quassy's Splash Away Bay waterpark for the 2022 season. The attraction will be the venue's biggest investment in its 113-year history.

Construction of the water coaster is underway and the ride is expected to be ready in time for the park's opening in spring next year.

The new attraction is designed by ProSlide Technology Inc. and will feature the company's patented RocketBLAST water jet propulsion system. This involves high-pressure jets pushing rafts designed for two people up three individual inclines. The attraction will also feature four ProSlide FlyingSAUCER elements, enabling high-speed accelerating over banked turns.

The water coaster extends for more than 600ft in length and has a capacity of 340 people per hour.

Eric Anderson, president of Quassy, commented: "This new attraction will actually be what is recognised in our industry as a water coaster. It will incorporate some of the latest technology in waterslides with features we've never presented at the park. And when I say water coaster, it will be just that as water jets will actually push the rafts up a number of inclines."



SeaWorld's Howl-O-Scream returns to Texas for 20th year

SEAWORLD'S Howl-O-Scream, hailed as the biggest and scariest Halloween event in Texas, is returning for its 20th year.

From September 17 to October 31, Howl-O-Scream will be entertaining visitors at SeaWorld San Antonio.

The 20th anniversary year for Howl-O-Scream promises to be spookier and scarier than ever according to the park, with the all-new horror-filled haunt known as The Swamp at Blackwater Bayou being introduced. Unsuspecting "victims" will be transported into a mystifying and scare-filled Louisianan bayou, where they will journey through the moss, muck and mayhem of a boggy swamp and a foggy boathouse and mansion. Explorers will encounter 12 spine-tingling scenes of horror in this new Howl-O-Scream adventure.

Also new to the 20th anniversary event will be scare zones known as terror-tories and new bars with Halloween-themed drinks. Firm Howl-O-Scream favourites will also return for the 20th year of fear, including the Milton Creek Manor, where, once guests have checked in, there's no checking out!

Not-so-scary fun is available for little ones, including the hay maze, dance party, a Halloween parade, in-park trick-or-treating and a pumpkin patch picnic. Also new to the 2021 event is a Dia de los Muertos themed realm, which explores a cultural tradition that has been embraced in Texas for many generations.

Shark Discovery touchpool opens at Audubon Aquarium

AUDUBON Aquarium in Mississippi, one of the United States' leading aquariums, has expanded with a new attraction.

Earlier in the summer, the Shark Discovery attraction opened, this being a 13,000 gallon shark and ray touchpool. The pool is approximately 60ft long and 16ft wide at its widest point, making it six times bigger than the aquarium's previous stingray touchpool. A huge interactive LED screen extends for the full length of the pool, which is home to a variety of rays, sharks and fish, showcasing the diversity of the ocean.

The touchpool cost \$2.9m to construct and takes up virtually the whole of the aquarium's second floor. It is the largest project at Audubon Aquarium since the Great Maya Reef opened in 2014.

Audubon Aquarium is a member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and has teamed up with fellow members of the organisation to assist with the Saving Animals From Extinction (SAFE) campaign. This provides an alternative approach to collaborative conservation through a Conservation Action Plan. The plan comprises a range of projects, actions and objectives, designed to cater for the needs of individual species, including sharks and rays.





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WATERPARKS

Holiday World & Splashin' Safari launches Foster Family Programme

HOLIDAY World & Splashin' Safari World, the theme park and waterpark in Santa Claus, Indiana, US, has partnered with foster care agencies in Kentucky, Indiana and Tennessee, to co-launch a new Foster Family Programme.

The initiative enables children in foster care in the participating states to visit Holiday World & Splashin' Safari once a year for no cost. Resource parents and people accompanying the children in foster care to the parks are eligible for discounted tickets.

Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear commented on the scheme, saying: "We are so grateful to Holiday World for recognising foster families with this benefit. The amazing foster parents I've met say their biggest reward is helping children and their families heal and reunite, but benefits like this give them an invitation to the summertime fun and adventure that every child deserves. What a great way to say thank you to these dedicated parents for all they do."

Matt Eckert, Holiday World president and CEO, said: "We can't think of a better way to celebrate 75 Years of Fun than rolling out the Foster Family Programme to share the fun with as many families as possible."



Intamin announces upgraded versions of Surf Family coasters

INTAMIN has announced a complete upgrade to its 'Surf Family' coasters. The upgrades are known as the Surf Rider 2.0, which is available in two sizes, and the Ultra Surf, which has significantly increased capacity.

The upgrades are powered by what's hailed as the most powerful LSM launch system and utilise larger, state-of-the-art, free-spinning gondolas, which feature 20 seats instead of 12, enabling operators to achieve almost double the ride capacity every hour. The weight of the rides has also been significantly reduced due to the use of lightweight construction materials and techniques.

With two beyond vertical, ejector intense gravity stall ramps, the Ultra Surf boasts a large number of airtime and weightlessness moments. With free-spinning vehicles, riders experience the feeling of floating and spinning through the air. With a shutter-style coaster design on a compact footprint, parks can acquire an extended coaster feeling with up to 600m of experience track on just 180m of physical track.

The Surf Rider 2.0 features a redesigned vehicle with reduced weight and almost double capacity. It also boasts a more powerful spin and is available in two sizes, both with compact footprints. One extends for 30m in height and the larger version reaches a total height of 40m. The ride is also available with a controlled spin incitation.



WhiteWater announces creation of Parallel Pursuit



WHITEWATER has announced the arrival of the Parallel Pursuit. The racing waterslide enables riders to sit side-by-side as they race down a track and enjoy a shared racing experience.

The ride boasts sections that are both open and closed. Lane switching adds to the excitement as sections are linked by twisting enclosed aqua tubes. The parts of the tube that are enclosed feature a translucent stripe designed to enhance the atmosphere. The first installation of the Parallel Pursuit took place at Nocatee Spray Park in Florida, where guests have been enjoying the interactive, lane-switching race ride.

Paul Chutter, president and CEO of WhiteWater, said: "Racing waterslides are a great way to encourage repeat ridership, combining skill and thrill as guests challenge others as well as themselves. Whether that's to beat a friend or their own personal best, Parallel Pursuit has the added benefit of increasing a park's dwell time.

"Parallel Pursuit's innovation lies in its lower separating walls that allow riders to see each other, not just on straightaways but also on turns, in both open and enclosed sections," Chutter added.

Aquarium of the Pacific's whale exhibit turned touch free



THE Whales: Voices in the Sea exhibit at the Aquarium of the Pacific in California has been transformed into a touchless attraction, where visitors can control the interactive content without touching surfaces or buttons.

The retrofit project was carried out by Cortina Productions, the full-service media design and production company.

The exhibit is powered by Ultraleap technology, specifically their camera module and TouchFree application. It provides touchscreen emulation by detecting a user's hand mid-air and converting it into an on-screen cursor.

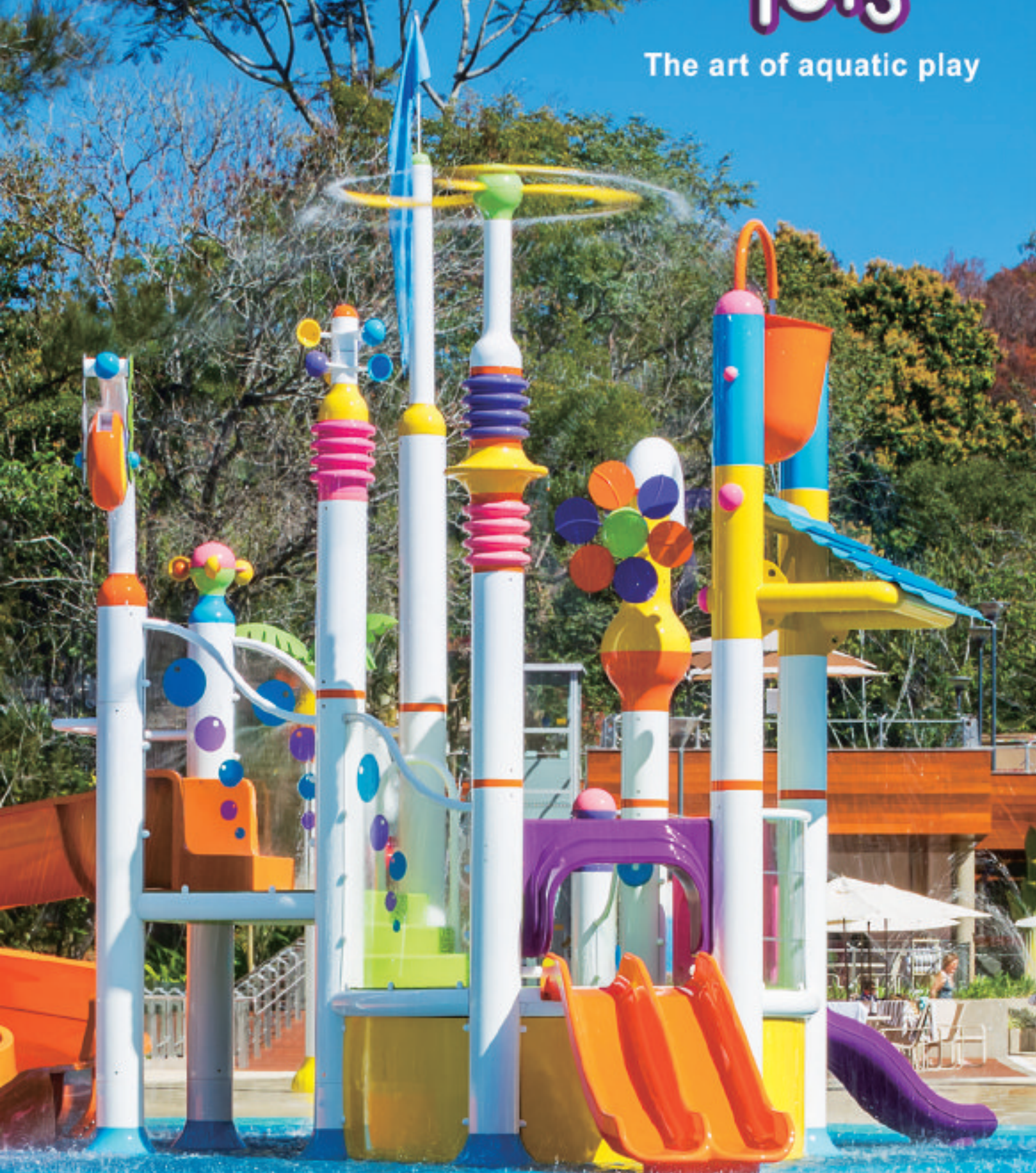
The 10-year-old exhibit is now fit for a modern audience, offering hygienic solutions that enable visitors to engage with the interactive exhibit and learn more about the oceans without having to touch a button.

Jim Cortina, Cortina Productions' principal, commented: "Since we created these Aquarium of the Pacific experiences over a decade ago, we've had a wonderful working relationship with their team. It's been exciting to work with them again as well as our partners at Ultraleap to bring touchless technology to the Whales: Voices in the Sea exhibit.

"The speed at which we've been able to implement the touchless software – days as opposed to months – means we can react to visitor needs and provide a variety of interactive options to help people feel comfortable in a museum setting again," Cortina continued.



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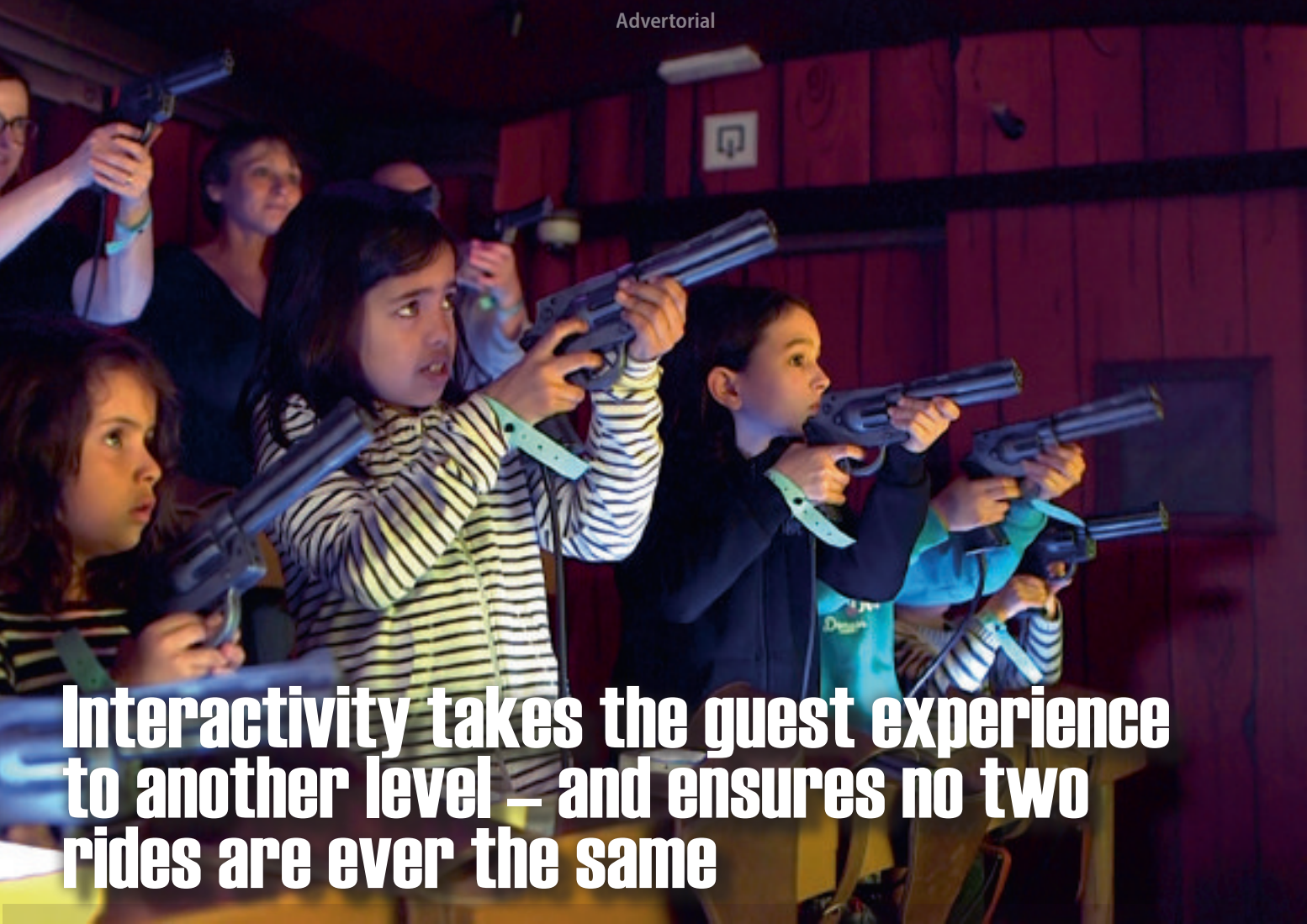
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Interactivity takes the guest experience to another level – and ensures no two rides are ever the same

The Alterface team looks at how interactivity enhances attractions and the overall guest experience

BELGIUM-based Alterface is well-known for its high quality, media-based, interactive attractions which “unite friends and families.”

Providing a host of custom designed technical solutions right through to full turnkey attractions, the company ensures that screens, physical sceneries, animatronics, FX, audio, vehicles and all other ride elements are fully aligned and synchronised. As the company states: “Our technology is a means to just one end – entertaining visitors and making sure they can fully enjoy the ride!”

Talking to *InterPark* about the importance of interactivity in today's attractions and how this can impact on the overall guest experience, Alterface's Laurence Beckers, creative director, and Etienne Sinton, product manager and head of software engineering, first outlined their definition of “interactivity.”

“It is giving ownership and realism to an attraction by letting visitors change the story depending on their own actions and choices,” Sinton notes, with Beckers adding: “Interactivity is the connection between a visitor and everything surrounding him/her in the theme park – actors, animatronics or characters on a screen. In our case, interactivity is how the content of an attraction will react depending on the action of the visitors; how the scenery of a themed park will evolved while you are

wandering across an area; and how to bring the story alive. Sometimes it is a simple action-reaction, sometimes a big wow effect but it may also be a more subtle and contemplative form of interaction.”

Such attractions can clearly set themselves apart from others in many different ways, Sinton believing that if well integrated within the story the interactivity can put a feeling of responsibility on the visitors' shoulders – a “the future of the world depends on you” type scenario.





“For most attractions where the pitch is based on ‘something went wrong and now we have to fix it,’ the interactive aspect should be considered,” he says. “This is what transforms the experience from a passive one to an active one.”

“Interactivity engages players to actively participate in the story,” adds Beckers. “It brings a specific effective relationship between the visitor and the story he/she is taking part in. It makes the experience unique and personalised. In a way, guests create their own stories and endings.”

Of course which age groups an interactive attraction is aimed at is another key consideration for both ride developers and operators. Generally, such attractions can be designed for and enjoyed by all visitors, both young and old, although as Sainton notes, in an

amusement park most of the rides aimed at a young adult audience and teenagers will involve high thrills and fast motions which makes the interactivity element minimal. However, in the context of a classic theme park it is more usual to have interactive attractions targeting a family audience, as the rest of the audience gets a different product. And Beckers expands on this area, saying: “The whole family, every age group, can benefit from interactivity, but they will not all use it in the same way. Some visitors are more competitive, mostly kids and teenagers. They want to win, to be the best players. Other visitors are more interested in the narrative part and will want to explore and go deeper into the story, to be part of it, interacting with the fictional characters. There are different kinds of interactivity as there are multiple types of visitors.”

Every product produced at Alterface incorporates interactivity as the company believes it is one of the most efficient ways to involve visitors in the experience. That said, according to Sainton, “it can go in different directions with dark rides that can be based on gaming (such as Naruto at FujiQ Island) or on a heavy story (such as Bazyliśzek at Legenda) immersive and free roaming walkthroughs; rotating rides – from the heavy story based Rotating Ride which uses the platform to change the scenery behind your back, or the pure action game Action League which pushes the envelope of fast interactivity; and of course our classic Interactive Theatres! “We are always creating new interactive products, not focusing on the interactivity but on the main concept behind it,” he adds. “Our next products will integrate a way to create way more intricate interactive stories; the riders’ actions will have a stronger impact on the content.”



Technology is obviously key to creating successful interactivity within an attraction, so how have recent advances changed the way interactive attractions are designed and built today?

"For a long time the technology only allowed visitors to play with physical targets, which would look like red or green dots installed in the scenery," Sainton explains. "It could be fun but was never immersive. Alterface's technology allowed visitors to interact with every element – media content through a screen, physical objects without any sensors required, animatronics, fog screen – so now it is not required to have an 'interactive area' and a 'non-interactive one,' or to have technology visible in your nice scenery. That was the first revolution 15 years ago.

"The two more recent changes of note include software generalisation in attractions, especially for the show control. This allows us to interface the interactive elements (including interactive media) with classic show control elements. Additionally, a high quality, real time game engine allows us to create interactive attractions on a par with non-interactive ones.

"For example, when Spiderman was created it introduced for the first time 3D media with a perspective aligned with the position of the vehicles; this could only be done in pre-rendered media at the time. But now, with a powerful game engine it can be done in real time, as was the case during the installation of Justice League BFM from Sally Dark Rides (this technology was created in collaboration with Oceaneering and Pure Imagination). Now imagine that with a non-linear path such as Popcorn. Depending on your action your vehicle could change course and the media rendering would adjust to make sure the illusion is working!

"The next step is obviously using those game engines to model and test an attraction in VR years before building it. It will allow us as well to test the interactivity while developing the 3D model, story and timeline." And Beckers expands on this area, commenting: "Giving the possibility to your visitors to act freely means creating an open world where they can freely wander. The way you design your layout has to take into account the multiple possibilities or choices of your visitors while still delivering an exciting and surprising adventure. Writing a non-linear story is also a new form of art design. Interactive narratives have to guide the experience in a satisfying way whatever the guest is doing.

"Some limitations have been solved," she continues, "like the capacity to manage a big amount of data. So you can have a personalised story at the scale of the whole theme park. Everything could be connected – the attraction, the restaurant, the hotel. It fully immerses and engages guests into the story, which becomes more dynamic and fun." Many would agree that shooting at targets is perhaps the most obvious form of interactivity on a ride. But what other interactive 'activities' or 'actions' operated by the riders/guests can be incorporated into a ride?

"While having a 'pointing device' it is possible to paint, drag and drop to solve puzzles, collaborate with other players and more," Sainton notes. "But in a more general way, to us interactivity is really that your actions can change the story so we need two essential



components – a way to identify the visitor and a way to understand the action the visitor is doing. So, entering a room where we can identify you and pushing buttons to solve a physical puzzle is enough and allows us to create an interactive story around these experiences. As long as we have these two elements of information and they make sense to the story, your experience can be successful." "The content of the media or the end of the ride could change," Beckers adds. "You can collect magic gems, paint the wall, influence the decor, open hidden doors. You can repeat the attraction and live a new experience each time you come back. The content of the story could react to players' ages and levels of ability within the game, triggering special effects and steering different physical ride paths based upon their inputs." Significant progress has clearly been made over the years in this area of attraction development, but what do our interviewees believe the future holds for interactivity in attractions.

"New technology offers experiences blending digital and physical into one consistent world, a magical immersive experience that we share together," Beckers states. "Attractions will combine the story-world, interactions, excitement and thrill. It will enhance the guests' feeling of immersion in a story world full of surprises and entertainment. The idea is to create unique fictions as strong as the real world, an artificially evolving magic ecology." "Depending on the type of attractions there are multiple trends we can see emerging or that will continue," Sainton adds. "These will include more integration of everything in the show, to make sure the interactivity is finally a proper piece of the story and not a fun piece of technology. Blending the interactivity with everything else will be perfectly done in the next few years as very few elements still need to be improved and incorporated.

"Personalised interactivity, not only in an attraction but everywhere and which continues with the visitors instead of resetting each time you exit a ride, will also come in, as will adaptive content depending on your actions." Undoubtedly there is plenty to look forward to in the future when it comes to interactive attractions – and Alterface will certainly continue to be at the forefront of the market.



Jurassic World VelociCoaster I Universal's Islands of Adventure, Orlando

By David Whitworth

ON June 10 this year, the widely anticipated launched roller coaster Jurassic World VelociCoaster hatched into reality. A warm "Welcome to Jurassic Park" as the film states. The home of this new "species" is Universal's Island of Adventure in Orlando, Florida.

The attraction is built upon the hit film franchise series *Jurassic World*, which spans nearly 30 years. Guests are challenged to "Feel the rush of the hunt" as "Speeding through the jungle, rising high above the terrain, it's the apex predator of roller coasters: the Jurassic World VelociCoaster."

The area of Jurassic Park in which Jurassic World VelociCoaster now lays was originally home to the Triceratops Encounter attraction before being replaced by Universal's latest creation. The construction process commenced in January 2019 under the codename Project 791. The attraction held its soft opening date back on April 30 to give guests and local media a glimpse of the park's newest dinosaur themed ride.

The manufacturer of this latest major addition to Universal Islands of Adventure is Intamin, who have collaborated again with Universal after

creating Harry Potter and the Escape from Gringotts in 2014 and Hagrid's Magical Creatures Motorbike Adventure in 2019.

The ride features a pre-queue show informing guests of what lies ahead. Neon lights, television screens and a statue of four Velociraptors of Blue, Charlie, Delta and Echo all add to the immersive experience. Velociraptor derives from the Latin words of *velox* (swift) and *raptor* (robber) due to the dinosaur's agility and predatory instincts. There are also two caged animatronic velociraptors, fitted with moving body parts, eyes and even breathing, all remarkably lifelike.

As guests move along the queue line, they see a wonderful computer generic video image of a simulated coaster launch with rabid velociraptors in hot pursuit. There are also two performers giving life to the fictional characters from the film series of Claire Dearing and Owen Grady, who provide further information of their voyage.

The ride vehicles consist of four trains with six cars in total. Passengers are seated two abreast across two rows with 24 riders in each train. The thrilling attraction commences through Raptor paddock and utilises the



first of two LSM launch systems. The first section goes from 0 to 50mph (80 km/h) in just two seconds, whereas the second hurtles along at speeds of 40 mph (64 km/h) up to the fastest section of 70 mph (110 km/h) in 2.4 seconds.

Riders are launched in the air and then propelled through various sections of intensity and excitement. The adrenaline filled sections include riders hovering just over the water themed areas. They also travel side-by-side with the Velociraptor dinosaur pack and experience a spectacular aquatic barrel roll over the Islands of Adventure lagoon as well as various near-miss elements involving rock work, trees and those dangerous dinosaurs of course. The beautifully authentic theming is a hallmark of the first launch section.

The tempo of the ride really ramps up in the second part with the faster launch section. Here, Jurassic World VelociCoaster shoots riders to its pièce de résistance of the coaster experience, as the ride's maximum height takes passengers up to 155ft (47m) in the air to climax with a dynamic top hat feature. This is followed by an 80 degree drop, the ride's and the park's biggest drop, reaching 140ft (43m), the trains racing around the track, especially after the second launched section, and travelling through a series of twists and turns. It includes four inversions along its 4,700ft (1,400m) long track and provides multiple sensations of air time as the coaster dashes through dinosaurs and other dangerous habitats lurking around.



Project profile



Images courtesy
NBC Universal/
Universal's
Islands of
Adventure

The track colour for the attraction is steel grey, which perfectly complements the dinosaur theme and contrasts effectively with the natural greenery of trees and plants located around the ride. The coaster traverses above land and water and its theming really enhances the riders overall coaster journey. It is an all sensory experience which quenches the riders thrill thirst. It is certainly "A new species of roller coaster" as the park proclaims.

Universal Islands of Adventure has gone all out to create a coaster at the cutting edge of technology. The park describes Jurassic World VelociCoaster as "an astounding thrill ride that propels guests into an immersive dinosaur habitat and on a breath-taking adventure complete with 360 degree inversions. VelociCoaster lives up to its name, delivering an unparalleled roller coaster experience."

The ride has a variety of interactive experiences to bring riders closer to the heart of the action. Guests are fully immersed in the dinosaur

experience as the park points out: "A game changer within the theme park industry and raising the bar as one of the most elaborate and ambitious roller coasters ever designed, Jurassic World VelociCoaster was conceived by the award-winning Universal Creative team in collaboration with the visionary film makers of the *Jurassic World* films, including Steven Spielberg, Colin Trevorrow and Frank Marshall. Its ingenuity redefines the roller coaster experience.

"Jurassic World VelociCoaster is the next exciting addition to Jurassic Park at Universal's Islands of Adventure. Only in this life-like land can visitors come face-to-face with life-sized dinosaurs in incredible theme park experiences, including Jurassic Park River Adventure, where a leisure raft ride turns into a daring eight-story plunge to escape a ferocious T-Rex, and Raptor Encounter, where guests can test their bravery and get up-close to Velociraptor Blue and the newest additions to the paddock – ferocious Velociraptor Bravo and baby raptors, Sierra and Tango – while learning more about the clever carnivores. Guests can also enjoy epic thrills at Universal Studios Hollywood in Jurassic World – The Ride where they'll encounter the all-new, extraordinarily realistic Indominus rex, who stakes her claim at the ride's finale in a forceful battle with her arch-rival, the Tyrannosaurus Rex."

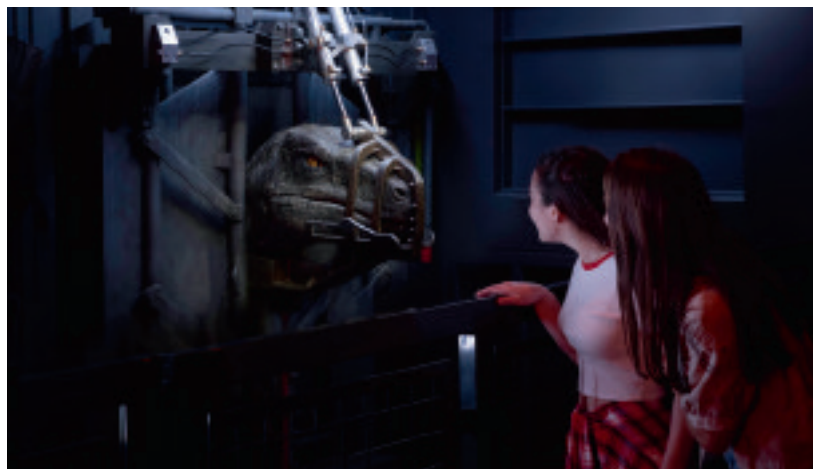
Guests not only enter those fabled Jurassic Park gates, but can also enter the world of Summer Tribute Store with Universal opening a retail store fitted with a whole host of Jurassic Park merchandise. It opened on May 27 and celebrates the film franchise with a variety of gifts, souvenirs and food beverages on offer to guests. The retail store also houses themed rooms inspired by the films such as the Control Room, Raptor Paddock and Lab. The Control Room houses new merchandise based on the Jurassic World VelociCoaster attraction, while guests can also analyse various dinosaur statistics. In Raptor Paddock, visitors can choose from dinosaur-themed summer clothing such as beach hats and



shorts. And in Lab, guests can see where the dinosaurs were created and check out genuine props from the original *Jurassic Park* films. It is a must behind-the-scenes tour for all Jurassic film fans. Lab also houses merchandise from Mr. DNA, a new animated series featuring Jurassic World: Camp Cretaceous.

Food is the name of the game at the Jurassic Park Tribute Store and visitors can sample dinosaur-themed delights such as chocolate dinosaur egg shells, a “Dig-In” dessert jar filled with chocolate cake and the roller coaster’s very own VelociCoaster cupcakes. Spoilt for choice springs to mind at the delightfully themed Summer Tribute Store.

As the film tagline goes, “Life finds a way.” Certainly, Jurassic World VelociCoaster finds a way to give visitors a thrilling experience.



Shelby Honea, show producer, and Gregory Hall, art director, of Universal Creative discussed in further detail Universal’s latest thrill ride Jurassic World VelociCoaster, answering a number of questions put to them by *InterPark*.

What was the investment in Jurassic World VelociCoaster?

SH: “As John Hammond would say, we spared no expense. Our goal was to create a new species of roller coaster for our guests and we spent exactly what was needed to bring this epic new experience to life.”

What was the process of choosing the name Jurassic World VelociCoaster?

SH: “We looked at the attractions featured in Jurassic World and they all have very intuitive and straight forward names: Gyrosphere, Gentle Giants Petting Zoo, etc. VelociCoaster really feels like a name you would see on a real Jurassic World map. It’s also the perfect blend of what this experience is all about – Velociraptors and coaster thrills.”

What challenges did the project face?

GH: “Challenges are part of the fun! When creating an attraction with so many ‘firsts,’ you’re bound to run into a few as you work to introduce new, innovative experiences to guests. Our team really learned the importance of keeping everyone informed and on the same page throughout the entire process. From engineers to architects, designers and more, we all had the responsibility to analyse every detail of the attraction and ensure we were communicating with each other regularly.”

Can you outline the process of incorporating the flavour of the Jurassic Park film franchise into the ride and theming?

GH: “Every element of Jurassic World VelociCoaster is part of the Jurassic DNA, which is comprised of teeth, thrills and environment. You have to have dinosaurs on a ride centred around Velociraptors, so ‘more teeth’ definitely was the way to go. The track layout, one-of-a-kind coaster manoeuvres and overall attraction ambiance were designed to evoke a thrilling experience for our guests. And finally, the environment was designed to transport guests directly in to Jurassic World. From lush green landscaping to incredible rockwork within the Raptor Paddock, the environment is not only immersive, it complements the guest experience on the actual attraction. All three elements were equally important during the design process.”

Barcelona set to play host to IAAPA Expo Europe



Paris was the host city of IAAPA Expo Europe when it was last held in 2019

AFTER a year's hiatus due to the global pandemic, IAAPA Expo Europe returns to the industry calendar in 2021 to provide participants with a welcome "face-to-face" event offering a three day trade show, a full conference programme and a host of other complementary events.

Taking place from September 27 to 30, with the trade show open from September 28 to 30, this year's expo is being held at the Fira Barcelona Gran Via in Barcelona, Spain. IAAPA Expo Europe is the largest international trade show and conference and the primary meeting point for the attractions industry in the Europe, Middle East, Africa (EMEA) region and once again promises much for those planning to attend.

With an exhibitor list (at the time of writing taken from the organiser's website) featuring approximately 450 manufacturers and suppliers, not surprisingly under the current circumstances that figure is notably down from the last time the event was held, in September 2019 in Paris, when just under 650 participants filled the trade show floor. So a considerably reduced event is in the offing compared to when it was last held.

Having said that, all the key companies visitors would expect to see at the event will be present, along with many others, so despite the difficult times there will be plenty to keep visitors occupied and an extensive range of products and services to discover and view.

In addition to the three-day exhibition, IAAPA Expo Europe will also play host to a full conference programme which will include keynote addresses, industry presentations, panel discussions and workshops covering industry trends, best practices and outlooks for the future.

Topics are due to include F&B, marketing, human resources, operations, trends and innovation, accommodation and design, among others. The opening keynote, entitled Futureproofing the Attractions Industry, will be provided by Doug Lansky, distinguished travel journalist and advisor, who will discuss how attractions can find a balance between profit and smart preparation – aka "futureproofing." The presentation will form part of this year's Opening Ceremony on the morning of the first day of the trade show, which will also see a CEO Talk session take place.

Among the main events the following day will be the annual Leadership Breakfast which begins at 8.30am. This will be opened by a 10 minute presentation from Fernando Aldecoa, CEO of PortAventura World, and will look at the venue's sustainability efforts. Following Aldecoa will be internationally recognised "life consultant and advocate of the unusual" and author of world-renowned book *Be More Pirate*, Sam Conniff, who will lead an interactive workshop in which he will present and practise with participants about How to be More Pirate – Leadership with a Twist.



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The same day will also see a Lunch and Learn session hosted by Dr. Rebecca Homkes, high-growth strategy specialist, who will cover the topics of Survive, Reset and Thrive: Strategy and Growth out of a Downturn. Another session, entitled Cheers

to our Mistakes, will also be available, this informal event featuring three industry colleagues who will reveal details of their biggest professional failures and how to learn from your mistakes.

A number of special events and dedicated "days" will be another feature of this year's expo, with special events being hosted by PortAventura World, Water World and Aquadiver and Tibidabo. They include professional development programmes, behind-the-scenes facility tours, keynotes, workshops and more.

An EDUTour of PortAventura will be among the events. The park opened its doors 26 years ago in 1995 and is the largest theme park in Spain. It has innovated constantly and participants will be able to enjoy a backstage tour at PortAventura World with the venue's operations team while learning how the facility delivers thrills, excitement and an excellent guest experience each day. The event will conclude with a joint networking reception with IAM and Safety Institute attendees. This will take place on Monday, September 27.

On the same day, and at the same location, the IAAPA Safety Institute will be held, this providing an opportunity for attraction owners and

operators to learn about the latest developments and best practices in ride safety standards, loss prevention, risk management, ride design and safety compliance.

Also at PortAventura, and again on September 27, will be the new Sustainability Day, a full-day programme dedicated to the important issues and topics facing the global attractions industry regarding environmental, social and economic sustainable operations. A Waterpark day on September 27, featuring a seminar and networking educational event for waterpark owners, operators, designers and manufacturers, will be held at Water World and Aquadiver, while there will also be an Indoor Entertainment day, again featuring inspirational educational sessions and unique networking opportunities. This will be held at the Fira Barcelona Gran Via.

Among the main networking events will be the popular Opening Reception which this year takes place on the evening of the opening day of the trade show at Tibidabo, with a host of attractions being open and available for participants to enjoy. A Young professional's forum will also be held during this year's Expo, on the evening of September 29 at the Fira Barcelona Gran Via.



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Legoland Windsor Resort opens new Lego Mythica themed area in 25th anniversary year

AN epic new land that transports children and their families to a parallel universe of adventures and mythical creatures has opened to guests at the Legoland Windsor Resort in the UK.

Celebrating Legoland Windsor's 25th anniversary, Lego Mythica: A World of Mythical Creatures has received £20m (\$27.5) worth of investment, the biggest of its kind since the resort opened its doors all those years ago, and uses a massive 1.76 million Lego bricks for the myriad of creature models featured throughout the space.

Created by children for children, Lego Mythica has been three years in the making and is the result of a partnership with Kids' Industries, which saw the resort team spend over a year discussing and testing ideas and concepts with six to 11-year-olds and their parents, who influenced everything from the final ride experiences to the names and characters.

Speaking exclusively with *InterPark* magazine, Helen Bull, divisional director at Legoland Windsor Resort, said: "Lego's values have always been around fun and creativity, but to my knowledge, this is the first time we've worked with children to create a themed area and its characters within the park. Because we were creating a new IP we wanted to see it from a child's point of view. Their imaginations are so broad and creative – it was almost like giving them a blank piece of paper to create their ideal, dream creatures. All the drawings the children came up with and the powers they gave the creatures have really made the area come to life."

Rides, attractions and experiences featured within the new themed area include the UK's first Flying Theatre ride from Taiwan-based Brogent – Flight of the Sky Lion. Standing at 25m tall, it is at the very heart of the new land. The ride and 4k film are perfectly synchronised with immersive effects and while on board the flying gondola, guests fly through a Lego portal into the parallel universe of Mythica where Lego creatures come to life. Soaring over the stunning landscape of Lego Mythica under the wing of The Sky Lion – Maximus, guests feel mist as they swoop over the ocean; wind as they dive down and even the smell of a baby Lego lava dragon's burp!

Speaking about the Flight of the Sky Lion ride, Theo Papadopoulos, the creative lead at Merlin Magic Making, the division of Merlin Entertainments behind the new land, said: "Lego Mythica is an alternative universe that is powered by imaginations. When kids build Lego creations, unbeknown to them these creations come to life in this parallel world. It has been an amazing experience for us all creating the epic universe of Lego Mythica and we hope to capture our guests' imaginations in this one-of-a-kind, UK first ride."



As well as the Flight of the Sky Lion ride, mini thrill seekers will get to experience the Fire and Ice Freefall drop tower rides from German manufacturer Zierer, which stand at 13m tall and are a test of bravery as they freefall above the land of Mythica. As well as this, an existing water ride has been reimagined for the new space into Hydra's Challenge – testing explorers' mettle as they prepare to get wet and steer their own vessel and featuring a 481,000 Lego brick model of the Hydra Sea Monster bursting from the depths below.

In the spirit of letting imaginations run wild, once inside the new land children and their families can build their very own mythical creatures at Creature Creation. Lego enthusiasts will also be dazzled by the 13 new Mythica models that have taken a team of model makers nearly a year to build using over 1.76 million Lego bricks – from the largest model in the land, a 685,000 Lego brick model of the Sky Lion, to the smallest, a winged Lizard made up of just under 4,000 bricks.

There is much more to enjoy too with an adventure play area called Lava Dragon Play; a character meet and greet experience with the loveable character Bits and Bobs; The Hungry Troll restaurant serving fresh fish and chips; and Beastly Bites, dishing up a menu of Mythica inspired doughnuts. Guests can also brave the Mythica Augmented Reality Experience in the Legoland App, which enables guests to scan Lego models in the land and watch them come to life, open up a portal at home and even collect a limited-edition POP Badge to give them a spy hole into the mystical world.



Project profile

Commenting on the challenges of the global pandemic and what that meant for the new area's development, Bull added: "On the whole, thankfully COVID didn't affect the opening of Mythica too much. From a health and safety point of view, yes it was difficult as we had various contractors working at any one time, so in terms of managing 'bubbles' and so on then yes, it was a challenge. As well as this, with Brogent being based in Taiwan we had to work around quarantining and so on, so we've definitely had easier projects, but we worked around it all as best we could! I think we were lucky we were so far into the project; if we had been working towards 2023, given Brexit and the cost and availability of suppliers, this would have had a massive impact.

"Mythica brings a new area to the park, opening up a space that was previously used by staff," she continued. "It has created another experience for our guests and a new reason to visit – it's bright and fresh and receiving five-star reviews, so is proving extremely popular. We are so excited to welcome children and their families into the incredible world of Lego Mythica, the first and only land of its kind on earth. Guests can build, create and let their imaginations run wild, while making incredible memories together as a family once again.

"We are really proud to launch Lego Mythica during our 25th anniversary year which is a huge achievement for all of the team who have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to bring this magnificent world to life."



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What the UK theme park industry can learn from Asia and the US

by Laurent Guinci



Laurent Guinci is the founder of LOLO Creative. He has worked on some of the most immersive experiences in the world with both Warner Bros. and Universal, including in Orlando, at Osaka's Nintendo World and at the much anticipated Universal Beijing resort. Here he takes a look at these markets, how they are developing and the differentiation between them, as well as discussing what sector players in the UK should be doing to keep up with and improve immersion within the industry

IN the fast-paced, technology driven world we live in today, people are increasingly looking for ways to step away from reality. It could be something as simple as reading a novel or surfing Netflix that offers a moment of escape while in the comfort of our homes. But for those seeking a day break or a longer getaway, theme parks and resorts have always been high on the list.

The UK boasts plenty of quality theme parks that have kept domestic thrill seekers satisfied throughout the years. Further from home, the likes of Disney World and Universal Studios are hugely popular among travellers from all across the globe and their ability to consistently deliver on the wow factor has kept us all coming back for more.

There is much to be learnt from the success of these global icons in their devotion to satisfying our ever-growing demand for escapism. In the UK, what sets them apart from local offerings is perhaps a focus on storytelling and attention to detail that results in a truly cohesive and immersive experience for the visitors.

The theme must permeate the park

Just as it is important to set the scene in a good novel, storytelling is equally a critical component in what sets apart the great theme parks from the forgettable. From the moment you set foot on Universal's City Walk or Disney's Main Street, the scene is already meticulously set to build up your anticipation for the unforgettable experience yet to come. From the innovative storytelling technology to thematic landscaping and buildings, to the staff that you interact with, all the details have been thoroughly considered to immerse you into a whole new world.

This winning formula was given a stratospheric injection with the opening and subsequent expansions of the Wizarding World of Harry Potter at Universal which took the immersive theme to a whole new level! The engineering of this world truly transports us into the magic of the expansive J.K. Rowling novels and there's not a minute, even during what is usually the mundane queues, when you break from this fantasy. The appetite for true immersion has grown for many theme parks around

the world, from Florida to Beijing to Japan and the forthcoming Qiddiya Project in KSA, to name but a few.

The world of theme park intellectual property

IP-led developments have been the ongoing trend as international parks seek to beat each other at delivering better immersive worlds. We only need to look at the latest Star Wars experiences at Disney, or the aforementioned Harry Potter Worlds to see that these were a huge driver towards the level of exceptionalism that has been produced and rightly so. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, Universal Studios “grew 109 per cent between 2010 and 2015 to \$3.34 billion” thanks to the addition of the Wizarding World.

UK parks like Thorpe Park or Alton Towers, while still boasting plenty of IP, tend not to buy-in to the bigger experiences around the rides themselves in quite the same way. The focus is more on the technological thrills of the coasters than the environment of the park. Factors for this could range from licence restrictions, site overhauls or may just be down to space. Elsewhere, testing new IP at parks as an entry level commitment has been a strategy taken by the UK's Paultons Park when the character Peppa Pig's visit in 2008 proved so popular that it led to the opening of Peppa Pig World at the park in 2011.

What lies at the core of the innovative and impactful nature of immersive entertainment is the powerful moments and memories created for its visitors. So, with this in mind two vital parts of the experience can be fully attuned to the ride and IP itself. The queue system is an often, especially in the UK, dull and frustrating place to be held for typically 40 to 120 minutes, especially during a typical British summer! This is a touchpoint where some immersive IP-driven designs can offer an important distraction from the monotony of waiting and offer a far more positive experience.

Park employees offer another important touchpoint where IP-led considerations can drastically make an impactful impression on visitors. Going back to the Harry Potter IP, Universal has made sure that immersion doesn't stop with the world itself. Most, if not all employees in this section of the park, are actors. Some actors even roam the streets, helping wizards and witches with their spellcasting.

Don't neglect uniform

Approaching your staff as one of your biggest assets to creating that immersive experience starts from helping them look and feel the part. Paying attention to the outfits of your staff can be a simple yet effective way to approach the immersive experience. It doesn't even need to be hugely elaborate either, but it should be cohesive and practical!

LOLO Creative has been part of some of the most popular immersive experiences in the world – from working with global parks like Universal Orlando, Nintendo World Osaka and designing the entire operational wardrobe for the brand-new Universal Resort in Beijing. The company has vast experience in this area having designed costumes for theme park staff in all disciplines from park services to attractions and F&B. We understand the importance uniform and other details play in immersion.

We have also optimised the art of creating differing looks with minimal changes using clever techniques. Our methods allow for full staff role rotation while maintaining the integrity of the look and IP. This positively reflects on customer experience, staff comfort and cost management. Utilising methods such as these can help UK theme parks keep up with the development and engagement of the US and Asian parks both domestically and internationally, becoming more and more a destination of choice from outside the local audience and into the wider international market.

Banding together to improve the future of UK theme parks

The major UK destinations are yet to stake their claim on creating fully immersive experiences. However, it could be a matter of time and the wheels may already be in motion – while the pandemic has indeed taken its toll on hospitality and leisure, it has also been an opportunity to reassess strategy, change gear and focus on how to invest in the storytelling element to our domestic theme park experiences.

Creating a destination where the customer wants to go is a baseline – how we all get there and make it happen involves a myriad of other partners, whether it's pushing the limits of technological and human endurance on ever more thrilling coasters, offering the best all-round facilities to create an all-inclusive and relaxing experience or providing a fully interactive itinerary to fulfil even the most energetic of visitors.

Plans in place for The London Resort show this method is already being thought about in the UK. As we continue to learn to live with the impacts of COVID-19 and people yearn to escape and have some fun, it's important for us to band together as partners to take a different look at our local offerings. Now more than ever, we have the opportunity to go beyond the historically different setup of our ride-led resorts and aim to deliver world-class immersive experiences.

About LOLO Creative

Laurent Guinci, or Lolo to his friends, is a French designer who has been based in London since 1994. Despite his origins in the sciences, he always had an innate urge to own a design business and created LFG Design, a design consultancy group that specialises in the fields of lifestyle and fashion and a precursor to LOLO Creative. Collaborating with the world famous Universal Studios, LOLO Creative started work on the Wizarding World of Harry Potter and swiftly became a preferred vendor for global ventures. Having worked on lands and events for Universal Hollywood, Orlando and Osaka, the company secured a major contract for the full park wide operational wardrobe at the forthcoming Universal Studios Beijing. In 2019, LOLO Creative was brought in to work alongside in-house art directors to firstly conceptualise and then fully design costumes for entertainment, media and wardrobe for multiple lands at the upcoming Universal park based in Orlando – Epic Universe.



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Rasmus Altenborg



Rasmus Altenborg, planning and development director, Tivoli Copenhagen

InterPark: Can you provide a brief outline of your time in the attractions industry and the positions you've held?

Rasmus Altenborg: I started when I was very young, driving a train in a park. I then started doing some designs prior to going to architectural school. I like the feeling of a park and the open atmosphere they have and I ended up doing a lot of design work for parks in Scandinavia. This is my second stint at Tivoli having worked here previously for three years. I returned in November 2020.

IP: What is the history of Tivoli Copenhagen? When was it founded and by whom?

RA: It began as Copenhagen Summer Tivoli in August 1843 and was founded by Georg Carstensen. It is Denmark's most visited attraction

and features rides, games, live music, ballet, our own Tivoli Youth Guard marching band, open air stages in the summer, flower gardens, unique architecture and more. When it was first founded people didn't travel like they do today so the park also had exhibitions and displays to bring different attractions to the venue.

IP: What do you feel are some of the key strengths and USPs Tivoli has to offer?

RA: The park's strength is definitely its history as a brand. Many of our guests came as a child and they now want to show the park to their children and grandchildren. We have fantastic city gardens and the whole place changes at night with special lighting. Halloween and Christmas are also very special times of the year at Tivoli, while we have a wide range of restaurants, shows, concerts and different seasons when different things happen. A lot of people come just for the restaurants and shows.

IP: Can you briefly describe the latest developments at the park and what was new for 2021?

RA: This year we have introduced the Villa Vendetta, a haunted house based on a family performing shows for guests. However, the storyline is that they stopped doing anything new and the guests stopped coming, so they are now a very resentful and bitter family. The atmosphere in the attraction is one of an old apartment or house where maybe someone died. Live characters are also used within the attraction. Also this year we have reinforced our F&B offering with two Michelin starred pop-up restaurants – Koks from the Faroe Islands and Restaurant AOC, a local Copenhagen restaurant. We also have the Gasoline Grill, one of the best burger facilities anywhere according to a well-known burger website, and the Anarkist Bar.

IP: How do you incentivise your staff to do the best job they can?

RA: Staff at Tivoli are really dedicated to the job anyway and enjoy working here so it is more a case of guiding them. The average length of time for staff to be here is currently 10 years so that speaks for itself.

In the design department we normally have a team of nine with this increasing to 20 for the Halloween and Christmas periods. We are responsible for all the visual elements within the park – from signage to attraction design to lighting.

IP: Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, what would you say were some of the main trends in the European parks and attractions industry and in the wider global industry too?

RA: One of the major trends has been parks wanting to keep guests for longer. Many are therefore looking at adding hotels and waterparks. This was important before the pandemic and still is. We have a high end co-operation with a local hotel and would like to have our own hotel too and do have the space to do this but we need to be creative. It would have to be themed and spectacular! IP, theming and a storyline are all very important nowadays.

IP: How has the pandemic impacted on Tivoli's opening periods, both in 2020 and 2021, and how has the park continued to engage with guests during any periods of enforced closure, prior to opening for this season?





Open to Question

IP: Obviously operating Tivoli during the past 18 months or so has been very different to previous years. What operational changes did you introduce to enable you to open and operate safely for both employees and guests?

RA: Due to the restrictions we had to have COVID controls at the entrance to the park and implemented a lot of one way directions in the more crowded areas. We also had distancing in the queue lines, sanitiser stations and several members of staff working as guides so that if crowds began to form they could split people up. We also had digital bookings for the rides and have had really good feedback from guests and high satisfaction levels in relation to the safety measures we have implemented. People have said they feel very safe walking around in Tivoli.

RA: We were basically forced to postpone the summer season last year and instead of opening in April began operations in June. This year we have operated as planned and have made a lot of effort to attract local guests at different times of the year. We are depending on locals more at the moment and have held a lot of festivals and celebration days, such as Mother's Day, Father's Day, food festivals and flower festivals. This has worked well as it has enabled us to attract people to come back regularly. Friday Rock was a regular event we held prior to the pandemic but we had to scale that back too, although we will be holding a full concert again in September.

IP: What are you envisaging the pandemic will do to visitor numbers this year at Tivoli? And are guests showing a willingness to visit or has confidence to visit parks and other venues been hit?

RA: We are getting a lot of local and domestic guests and they are tending to spend more than they did prior to COVID as they aren't travelling as much so have more to spend. Overall things could have been better but considering the situation it's all good. People also want to come out together again so we are benefitting from that.

IP: How do you think consumer behaviour in the future will change at parks in view of the pandemic?

RA: I think people may stay for a longer visit to avoid coming into contact with too many people by going to lots of different places. There is also a trend for guests to spend more as they aren't going out too much so when they do they go all in.

IP: What are some of your plans for the future as far as new attractions and facilities are concerned and will the situation surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic impact on these in any way?

RA: We have been using this period as an opportunity for long-term planning and looking at both new rides and enhancing existing areas. We have limited space at Tivoli but are positive for the post-COVID time and coming out of the past 18 months or so stronger and with a good team spirit. I think we will have a very good outcome from all of this.

Personally speaking

Not a lot of people know this but I am very good at ... mixing drinks

Family aside, the prized possession I value above all others is ... my car

My favourite film is ... *Crazy, Stupid, Love*

When I'm not working I like to ... spend time with my family

The person who has influenced me most is ... not a person but the whole industry

If I could invite a celebrity to dinner it would be ... Elon Musk

My unfulfilled ambition is ... to travel more

To really chill out I ... renovate my house

I really dislike ... lazy people

OK Corral, France



OK Corral is a family owned and operated amusement park located in Cuges-les-Pins in the South of France.

It was created in 1966 by a lion tamer named Jacky Rex. Fascinated by the Wild West, Rex, along with some friends, started out by building a small snack stand/saloon that acted as a backdrop to their shoot out re-enactments. It was at the height of the spaghetti western era in the 1970s when the business began to grow quickly, that OK Corral was sold to a French businessman who added the first swings and slides and turned it into a visitor attraction.

OK Corral was then sold again in 1979 to Henk Bembom, Snr. Believing that The Netherlands was too small a country to build a business where his large family would flourish, he looked to expand elsewhere in Europe. Fate brought him to France and eventually to OK Corral and the park has remained in the family ever since.

The park operates with 35 full time members of staff and about 200 seasonal staff who take care of rides, shops and kitchens, while a further 50 regular sub-contractors work all year round. Attracting around 400,000 visitors per year and with on-site accommodation available, OK Corral sees families both local to the area and from further afield heading to the park on a regular basis.

With an ethos that OK Corral is a "family run park for families," the rides are chosen to suite all ages but with an emphasis on children and teenagers. OK Corral's DNA is also in live shows where older audiences get to witness five different shows based on the Wild West each day. Cowboys, Indians, bandits and Mexicans are among the characters who bring the past to life.

Seasonal events such as Easter, Halloween and Christmas see the park fully redressed in seasonal colours. Special haunted houses are built, parades and shows created and fancy-dress competitions are held, all to make Halloween extra spooky, while pumpkins are grown and scattered around the park to allow for carving by the guests. Conversely Christmas sees tinsel, elves and even Santa's reindeer take up residency in the park to mark the festive season. The venue also organises several one-day events for classic car enthusiasts, American Independence day, charities and so on.

The rides at OK Corral are mainly traditional amusement rides with retro-fittings to accommodate people with disabilities and special adaptations on classic designs (the track has been closed on a Gerstlauer Boomerang ride for example, and custom horse and carriage trains have been made for a Zierer roller coaster). Three roller coasters, a log flume, a Pirate Ship, a Big Wheel, a Drop Tower and two swing rides are just some examples of the 35 different rides featured in the park. Zierer is probably the park's biggest supplier for rides, with two coasters, two swing rides and one Jet Ski, while the rest of the rides and attractions have been supplied by SBF, Huss, Reverchon, Technical Park and Gerstlauer.

A new area for the park in 2021 is Mexico. Featuring rides, a food outlet offering Mexican





specialities, new rest rooms and a variety of midway games, the plans have seen the park invest around €3.7m (\$4.3m). The Mexico area features three new rides — a Zierer Regatta named Piñata; a Technical Parc Aerobat Sky Rush named Voladores; and a Huss Bee Bee named TequilAbeille.

As part of this new development OK Corral set out to produce zero waste and all the existing infrastructure was demolished and sorted. All the stone and concrete was crushed to make new foundations, steel was sent off for recycling and the only waste on the worksite was the unrecyclable packaging from shipping. This was part of the park's owner's push towards a more environmentally friendly venue with an emphasis on recycled and recyclable products, energy management, minimising

plastic usage and wildlife conservation. As part of this, they have built a bird of prey education centre next to the park and all the park gardens are planted with compost produced by the park's 60 horse-strong stables.

OK Corral can currently sleep more than 400 people each night, with visitors having a choice of sleeping arrangements — ranging from simple teepees and air-conditioned and TV equipped luxury teepees, to frontier lodges, chuck waggons and ranch houses. There is something to suit every budget while there are also plans (COVID permitting) to extend the park's current accommodation offerings and promote more educational content throughout the park.

COVID has not cancelled plans, say the park's owners, but rather changed their order of priority. It was also the deciding factor for the new



developments such as the Mexico area; the team knew they would have a longer winter period to develop the new area without affecting the overall customer experience.

When it comes to food options at OK Corral, there are eight different dining locations available serving a variety of food, ranging from sit-down meals to fast food and snacking. Burgers, doner kebabs, chips and the French favourite “jambon beurre” sandwich are the most popular. Ice cream, slush drinks and sweet treats are also always a hit in the summer.

For the owners of OK Corral, they truly believe that customers feel the joy that their staff feel by working with them. “Parks are fantastic places to work because it forces you to keep a sense of child wonder and dream big,” they told *InterPark*. “We believe this is part of our success and the reason we are the biggest park in the south of France. OK Corral has become part of a family’s life and a ‘must-do’ day out.”



At a glance

Opened in 1966

Founded by Jacky Rex

Over 35 rides

Choices of accommodation

New Mexican themed area for 2021

Key suppliers: Zierer — Alligator Island (Jet Ski), Pioneer and Serpent Hopi roller coasters, Flying Turtle and Tornado swing rides, Indian Canoe Viking ship; Gerstlauer — Gold Rush boomerang; Huss — Aigle Noir and Crazy Horse; Reverchon — Splash Mountain; SBF — Rodeo, Pacific Rail Road and TNT

www.okcorral.fr

Would you wear the life jacket?



By Dennis Spiegel

Image courtesy Reuters

Continuing his series of articles on the attractions industry, International Theme Park Services (ITPS) founder and CEO Dennis Spiegel discusses how continued precautions and vaccination against COVID-19 are vital and will eventually help us win the battle against the pandemic

AS of this writing, more and more companies in the USA are requiring employees to wear masks, regardless of their vaccination status. Companies such as Wal-Mart, Target, Kroger, Publix Grocery and McDonald's have said that all corporate workers must be vaccinated by September 27. McDonald's, along with NBC and Capital One, have said that they have extended the work-at-home programmes put into place 18+ months ago. Comcast, owner of Universal Studios, has also

postponed the return-to-office plan that was in process. The New York Stock Exchange employees will all need to be masked before returning to the floor trading community.

We all know these shifts in vaccinations and masking are a result of changes in public health conditions that, here in the US, are based on recommendations from federal, state and local authorities. Like it or not, in 2021, this is the world we live in. These expectations, demands and shifts in working approaches by these and other companies joining such ranks daily are a result of the Delta variant piercing through the improvements we have seen implemented by hundreds of organisations during the last 60 days. Unfortunate, but necessary to stop this violent, virulent and bitterly hostile mutating enemy we have been combatting for 20 months.

So what is going to curtail and stop the growth and spread? Simple: masking and vaccinations will stop and eradicate the coronavirus and its mutations. Vaccinations are imperative to the eradication; have people forgotten that smallpox, polio, mumps, tetanus, rubella, meningococcal and quite a few more diseases were either eradicated or almost totally curtailed? Why? Because people got vaccinated! They followed the scientific findings and recommendations. Yes, it's a much larger populated world today than 100 years ago and things can be transmitted more easily these days based



on how small the globe has become. People can move from one point on the planet to the furthest destination in 24 hours. Planes, trains and automobiles (and cruising) take on a new meaning as it relates to the encapsulation of diseases today.

There are places on the planet with some of the largest populations that have less than five per cent of their inhabitants inoculated. We have countries like the US that have excess vaccines because people will not take it, some because they do not want to be told what to do and some because they believe conspiracy theories that say there are “chips” in the vaccines so that government can track us! What!? And we have people dying on other continents because vaccines are not available to them?! Shame on us! Are we really this foolish and brainless?

We have seen the impact in just 20 short/long months that COVID has had on the international travel and leisure industry. Please keep in mind we are moving into another major round of COVID-variant flare up. It is happening as I write this column. Can the world and our industry take another setback by COVID? No, we can't. There is a sense of exhaustion that has permeated our entire global industry. Some of the operators I have spoken to recently are dealing with emotional fatigue and parks and attractions are adapting and need more endurance just to get through the remainder of this year, let alone prep to move into 2022.

Think what you may and wish what you want. We are all in this undulating, wave-like motion of up and down reoccurrences and flare-ups of COVID. It is not going away until vaccinations are the norm and reach a level of penetration that coalesces the world into a single, sprawling, vaccinated community. Until it happens, the continuing spread of the virus will be with the world and our industry. I hope everyone will spread the word – weekly, daily and hourly – to friends, family and employees to get vaccinated. Don't be a part of the problem; we are part of the solution. I ask you and everyone a question – if you were on a boat that was taking on water, sinking and you could get a life jacket, wouldn't you put it on? Get the jab, spread the jab now. It's your life jacket.



Image courtesy PA Media

Dennis Spiegel is founder and CEO of International Theme Park Services (ITPS), based in Cincinnati, Ohio, USA. A past chairman of the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA), he has over 50 years' experience in the theme park and leisure industry. Since its inception in 1983 ITPS has worked on over 500 projects in 50 countries and is uniquely qualified to assist in all aspects of entertainment project development.

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News round-up ...

US Ride Entertainment has announced that Defiance, a record-breaking, one-of-a-kind Gerstlauer Euro-Fighter roller coaster set for Glenwood Caverns Adventure Park, has officially broken ground. Featuring a record 102.3 degree, 110ft-tall, freefall first drop – the steepest in the western United States – Defiance will also boast two custom-designed inversions, making it the highest looping roller coaster in the US at 7,132ft above sea level. Structure and track for the ride is currently being manufactured by Gerstlauer in Münsterhausen, Germany, and the coaster will be assembled on site by Ride Entertainment's Installations division. The ground-breaking event was held as part of the festivities for the American Coaster Enthusiasts' Preservation Conference.

CZECH REPUBLIC Fun City, located in the heart of Prague in the Old Town Square, has installed a Sacoa cashless operating system. The venue includes a wide range of the latest arcade and redemption games, as well as cranes, with a total of 45 games in operation in the 250sq.m location. Owners Remco Kriek and William Brinksma report being very satisfied with the results of the new system, which has exceeded their expectations in relation to revenues and the operational and administrative control of the business. Fun City installed Sacoa's most modern technology, RFID Spark card readers and two Kiosks K4. "Making the decision to switch to the Sacoa cashless system meant a significant growth for our business since the very first day. It is definitely making things much easier for us and completely exceeding our expectations," Remco Kriek commented.

UK Legoland Windsor Resort has revealed an impressive line-up of events for autumn and winter 2021. For the first time ever the resort hosted the Lego VIDIYO Music Fest from September 10 to 12 featuring festival inspired fun for the whole family

with interactive games, prize competitions, sing-alongs and activities. Also on offer, for Halloween, from October 14 to 31, is the return of Brick or Treat featuring a line-up of spooky activities for everyone to dig their fangs into, while the 25th Birthday Fireworks Spectacular will celebrate the end of the park's 25th anniversary year in early November. Legoland at Christmas will take place on selected dates from November 27 to January 3 with the resort transforming into a winter wonderland.

CANADA Triotech has released a new adventure for its Storm interactive, VR coin-op simulator. Available free of charge for all existing and future units, the new film, *Sugary Slope*, is part of the company's strategy to expand its content library. It takes players on a fun, action-packed and competitive race in a world of candies, lollipops and chocolate geysers and will appeal to children and young adults alike. The Storm simulator is an operator-free, multi-player, interactive, VR coin-op ride incorporating motion capture technology which eliminates the need for players to touch components or controls. Players interact by simply waving their hands.

TURKEY The ATRAX exhibition, due to be held from February 3 to 5, 2022, at the Istanbul Expo Centre, Turkey, is expanding its coverage once again with the integration of another entertainment/leisure sector as part of the event. Inspired by the success it achieved with VENDEX Turkey last year, the show organisers have decided to expand the coverage of ATRAX further by integrating AQUAFUN – Pool-Spa, Wellness and Water Entertainment Exhibition, as part of the overall event. AQUAFUN will introduce investors and architects from the tourism sector, public sector and construction sector to professionals from the pool/water amusements and spa service and products industries.

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